Al-`Ilm al-Hudûrî

Knowledge by Presence

An Epistemological Bridge between
Philosophy and Mysticism

Dr. S. M. R. Hejazi , H.I.M.

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Hejazi, H.I.M.

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The Book: This book explores the issue of knowledge by presence as an epistemological problem in philosophy. Al-`Ilm al-Huduri (knowledge by presence) deserves as an epistemological bridge between philosophy and mysticism. This book is a comparative study of the epistemology of Suhrawardî and Mullâ Sadrâ Shîrâzî, two Muslim thinkers of the 6th/12th and 11th/17th century. It focuses on two main issues: Illuminative theory of knowledge and, in the framework of this theory, Mullâ Sadrâ's doctrine of knowledge by presence (al-'ilm al-hudûrî) studied in the context of his philosophical system (al-hikmah al-muta'âlîyah). Mullâ Sadrâ's doctrine of knowledge by presence is the corner stone of his epistemological system. In the light of this doctrine, he gives a new definition of knowledge, an innovative interpretation of its division into al-'ilm al-hudûrî and al-'ilm al-husûlî, and, finally, a systematic chain of various kinds of knowledge by presence (e.g., self-knowledge, God's knowledge of His Essence and God's knowledge of things). These three aspects of his doctrine have been surveyed and, in comparing them with Suhrawardî's theory, evaluated in this book.

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IN THE NAME OF ALLAH

THE MOST BENEFICENT

THE MOST MERCIFUL

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CONSONANTS

	Arabic	Persian			Arabic	Persian
ء	ʻ	ʻ		ص	S	S
ب	B	B		ض	D	Z
پ	-	P		ط	T	T
ت	T	T		ظ	Z	Z
ث	TH	TH		ع	ʻ	ʻ
ج	J	J		غ	GH	GH
چ	-	CH		ف	F	F
ح	H	H		ق	Q	Q
خ	KH	KH		ک	K	K
د	D	D		گ	-	G
ذ	DH	DH		ل	L	L
ر	R	R		م	M	M
ز	Z	Z		ن	N	N
ژ	-	ZH		و	W	V/U
س	S	S		ه	H	H
ش	SH	SH		ی	Y	Y

VOWELS

long	ا	**ā**
	آ	**Ā**
	و	**ū**
	ي	**ī**
Doubled	ى	**īy or iyy (final form ī)**
Persian)	و	**uww (final form ū), uvv (for**
Diphthongs	و	**au or aw**
	ى	**ai or ay**
Short	ـَـ	**a**
	ـُـ	**u**
	ـِـ	**i**

Notes on technicalities

1. The system of transliteration that has been used throughout this work for both Arabic and Persian is the one employed by the Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University with the following exceptions: The transliteration of the feminine ending "*tâ marbûta*" (É, ÜÉ) is rendered as [a] when it is not pronounced, in words such as *Nihâya*, and [at] when it appears in a construct (*idâfa*) formation, like in the case of *Hikmat al-Ishrâq*. I have used [â], [î] and [û] instead of [a], [i] and [u].
2. The article 'al' is almost always dropped from Arabic family names in the text.
3. All translation from Arabic and Persian into English are mine unless otherwise stated in the footnotes.
4. Since this book has focused on an analysis based on primary sources, the convention of citing the original text in brackets (parentheses) has been used, immediately following the translation or exposition of the author's writings. This has the advantage of enabling the reader to turn to the original immediately if he so wishes.
5. Dates have generally been cited according to the lunar Islamic date (*Hijrî*) followed by its equivalent Christian date.

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

I. General

The problem of knowledge (*al-'ilm*)[1] in the history of Islamic thought has been considered a main problem in the fields of philosophy, theology and logic. Muslim philosophers and theologians, holding different doctrines and backgrounds, have approached the problem, regarding various aspects of knowledge and its close relation to other philosophical and logical issues. They have propounded the problem of knowledge in several places of their works under titles such as *al-wujûd al-dhihnî* (mental existence), *al-nafs* (soul or spirit), *al-ilâhîyât* (theology or divine knowledge).[2]

In fact, when we approach the works of such Muslim thinkers as *Fârâbî*, *Ibn Sînâ* (Avicenna), *Ghazzâlî, Tûsî, Ibn 'Arabî* and *Suhrawardî* (from third/ninth to sixth/twelfth centuries)[3], as well as *Mullâ Sadrâ, Sabzavârî* and *Tabâtabâ'î* (from tenth/sixteenth century onward), we can find considerable parts of their works in which they have argued about the problem of epistemology (the theory of knowledge).[4] However, Muslim thinkers, having contemplated the ontological problem at issue, were more interested in some specific topics with regard to the subject and the object of knowledge whereas the question of the adjustment of one's

perception, as a subject, with the external objects has been hardly taken into account.[5] In other words, apart from some questions raised by Ghazzâlî, they did not explicitly examine the skeptical problems which have been, more or less, taken into consideration by the epistemological systems in Western philosophy, specially in modern philosophy–i.e., philosophy since the Renaissance.[6]

Nevertheless, the existence, the nature and the divisions of knowledge, the close relation between knowledge and existence, as well as its attributes and characters are major subjects discussed by Muslim thinkers in their works.[7]

One who scans through the history of Islamic thought will come across the fact that the discussion of several aspects of the theory of knowledge was primarily raised by Muslim theologians (*mutakallimûn*) from the second century onward. Thereafter, a direct line of development can easily be traced from Fârâbî (d. 339/950) to Ibn Sînâ (d. 428/1037), and then to Ibn Rushd (d. 595/1198). This line of philosophical thought is called the Peripatetics in the history of Islamic philosophy (*al-Mashshâ`ûn*). On the other hand, an "Illuminative" school of thought was systematized and developed by Suhrawardî (d. 587/1191) and his successors (*al-Ishrâqîyûn*). Moreover, the line of mystical thought which was developed by Ibn al-'Arabî (d. 638/1240) and his followers occupied a notable portion of Islamic thought.[8]

In other words, pertaining to the Islamic intellectual framework, Muslim thinkers can be classified into four dominant categories: Theologians (*Mutakallimûn*), Peripatetics

(*Mashshâ`ûn*), Illuminationists (*Ishrâqîyûn*), and Mystics (*Sûfîs*). All of these four groups of Islamic thought dealt with the question of "knowledge," utilizing several languages and different methodological constructions. These four major schools of intellectual development, as well as the traditional context, became united in a vast synthesis as a new school of *hikma* (theosophy) called by its well-known author Mullâ Sadrâ Shîrâzî[9] the "transcendent theosophy" (*al-hikmat al-muta'âlîya*).

II. The philosophy of Mullâ Sadrâ

Mullâ Sadrâ,[10] the Persian philosopher of the 11th/17th century was the founder of the school of transcendent theosophy (*al-hikmat al-muta'âlîya*). He maintained the necessity of unifying various current schools of thought in order to demonstrate the universal truth that lies at the heart of all religions. He tried to establish a system of philosophy with a view to reconcile separate doctrines in Muslim thought, namely the peripatetic tradition (*al-mashshâ`îyya*) represented by Fârâbî (d. 339/950) and Ibn Sînâ (d.428/1037), the illuminationist tradition (*al-ishrâqîyya*) of Suhrawardî (d.587/1191), the mystical thought (*al-'irfân*) represented by Ibn al-'Arabî (d.638/1240), and the classical tradition of kalâm which had already entered its philosophical phase in Nasîr al-Dîn Tûsî (d.672/1273). He also adequately considered the works of Fakhr al-Dîn Râzî (d.606/1209) to the extent that,

according to F. Rahman, Râzî was Mullâ Sadrâ's most persistent target.[11]

Moreover, Mullâ Sadrâ used his deep knowledge of the Holy Qurân and hadîth of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) and the Imâms (p.b.u.t.).[12] The variety and universality of his method, style, and intellectual characters are obvious from his large works.[13] In this regard S. H. Nasr states:

> It is in the numerous writings of this veritable sage (Mullâ Sadrâ) that the vigorous logical discussions of al-Fârâbî and Ibn Sînâ, the critiques of al-Ghazzâlî and Fakhr al-Dîn al-Râzî, the illuminative doctrines of Shihâb al-Dîn Suhrawardî, and the supreme experiential knowledge of the Sûfîs as formulated by such masters of gnosis as Ibn 'Arabî and Sadr al-Dîn al-Qûnawî became united in a vast synthesis whose unifying thread was the inner teachings of the Qurân as well as Hadith and the saying of the Shî'îte Imams.[14]

Mullâ Sadrâ's cognizance of Greek philosophy and his familiarity with the school of Alexandria enabled him to study the ancient wisdom of those civilizations which had developed elaborate metaphysical theories. It was precisely this familiarity that enabled him to finally create a synthesis of all these traditions within the matrix of Islamic spirituality.

It is historically obvious that for several centuries the followers of two major opposing schools, namely the Peripatetics and Sufis, were challenging each other's intellectual aspects, having recourse to different methods. The possibility of bringing about a harmonization between these two schools was the question on the intellectual horizon of the

time. Before Mullâ Sadrâ, Suhrawardî (d. 587/1191) demonstrated that such a synthesis was not only possible but necessary. He maintained that a thorough familiarity with Peripatetic philosophy was the prerequisite for the understanding of the philosophy of illumination.[15] This attempt created a bridge between the rationalistic tradition and Sûfîsm.[16]Like Suhrawardî, Mullâ Sadrâ was wholly convinced of the interdependent relationship between mystical experience and intellectual thinking. Any philosophizing, on the one hand, which does not lead to the highest spiritual realization is but a vain and useless pastime; any mystical experience, on the other hand, which is not backed by a rigorous conceptual training in philosophy is but a way to illusions and aberrations.[17]

What makes Mullâ Sadrâ's philosophy unique and distinct from other philosophical paradigms is a particular methodology and mode of discussion. Mullâ Sadrâ not only narrates, evaluates, and, in some cases, criticizes different doctrines and traditional systems of thought, but he also clarifies and demonstrates some new philosophical problems which have been hardly considered by former Muslim thinkers.[18] These two crucial aspects of his philosophical system let him, on the one hand, function as a historian of Islamic thought, and on the other hand remain the dominating figure in the continuing tradition of Islamic philosophy to this day.[19]

Mullâ Sadrâ had a profound influence on Islamic philosophy, especially in Shî'îte circles. He not only laid the

corner stone for the development of future philosophical systems, but his school of transcendent theosophy (*al-hikmat al-muta'âlîya*) became a foundation upon which an esoteric interpretation of Shî'îte Islam was made. In one sense, it has been claimed that Mullâ Sadrâ not only revived the study of metaphysics in the Safavid period, but he also established a new intellectual perspective and founded the last original traditional school of wisdom in Islam.[20] Unlike Ibn Sînâ and Ibn Rushd, his works were not translated into Latin and, therefore, Mullâ Sadrâ has remained largely unknown to the West.[21]

With regard to the theory of knowledge and its relation to his ontological doctrine, Mullâ Sadrâ asserts that from an abstract concept of existence, there can be no way to the affirmation of a real individual existence. The real existence cannot be known except by direct intuition (*mushâhada hudûrî*), and any attempt to capture it in the mind by any idea must by definition fail. On the other hand, the nature of knowledge, he asserts, is only obtainable by *presence* of the real existence. In other words, all kinds of knowledge refer to the *knowledge by presence* in which the subject directly captures the real existence without any concept or form.[22] These two propositions, indicating a very fundamental basis of Mullâ Sadrâ's epistemological system, illustrate the close relationship between existence (*al-wujûd*) and knowledge (*al-'ilm*) in his philosophy.

In the view of Mullâ Sadrâ, a direct cognition of an object implies the cognition of its being, whether that cognition is empirical (*husûlî*) or intuitive (*hudûrî*) on the one

hand, or is sensible (*hissî*), imaginative (*khayâlî*) or intellective (*'aqlî*) on the other.[23]

Based on these very primary ontological and epistemological principles of the Sadrian philosophical system, the kernel and primary focal point of this study will be to explore and analyze the broad doctrine of this philosopher in its epistemological aspects.

III. This study and its methodology

The central task of this work is to attempt an analytical study of Sadrâ's theory of knowledge, particularly knowledge by presence, and his claim that it is only through intuitive knowledge that one is able to understand and grasp the reality directly and without mediation. Since his philosophical thought in general, and his theory of knowledge in particular, are notably influenced by Suhrawardî,[24] the illuminative positions will be comparatively and critically examined in this study.

Mullâ Sadrâ, we can say, approaches the problem of knowledge from the principles of his philosophical system "*al-hikmat al-muta'âlîyah*." These philosophical principles might be summarized as follows:

1. The principiality of existence (*asâlat al-wujûd*),

2. Analogical gradation of unique existence (*al-tashkîk fi al-wujûd*),

3. Immateriality of perception (*tajarrud al-idrâk*),

4. The division of knowledge into *al-'ilm al-hudûrî* and *al-'ilm al-husûlî*,

5. The unity of "perceiver," "perceived" and "perception" (*ittihâd al-mudrik wa al-mudrak wa al-idrâk*),

6. The function of the soul (*fi'l al-nafs*).[25]

His "philosophical epistemology," in point of fact, has been developed from these philosophical elements. In particular, his ontological views serve as the foundation upon which his ideas or theories on metaphysics, logic, and, finally, epistemology are established.[26]

Leaving out the problem of ontology,[27] which governs almost the whole field of metaphysics and lies far beyond the frame work of our subject, we may rightfully concentrate our attention on the problem of knowledge, particularly knowledge by presence. It is generally accepted that knowledge by presence distinguishes illuminationist epistemology in general, and Sadrian doctrine in particular, from the Peripatetic theory. This distinction is explicitly obvious in several fields of their epistemological system- e.g., the problem of definition and division of knowledge, the nature of man's knowledge, and the question of the knowledge of Necessary Existent. The core of the book, therefore, revolves around Mullâ Sadrâ's theory of theosophical epistemology called "knowledge by presence" (*al-'ilm al-hudûrî*).

To demonstrate Mullâ Sadrâ's notion of "knowledge by presence" one has to examine the following:

1. The definition of knowledge.

2. The division of knowledge into *al-ʻilm al-hudûrî* and *al-ʻilm al-husûlî*.

3. The nature of "knowledge by presence".

These problems will be discussed in the part I.

4. The sorts of "knowledge by presence".

This problem will be examined in the part II.

This book will not only illustrate the Sadrian doctrine and analyze its specific arguments but also compare it with the Suhrawardian theory of "knowledge". In addition to "self-knowledge," other kinds of "knowledge by presence" will be elucidated in this study as well. To do so, examining Mullâ Sadrâ's several works,[28] this study will focus more on his major and main work, *al-Asfâr al-Arba`ah*.[29] The works of Suhrawardî, in the comparing examinations, will be dealt with as well. In a philosophical system such as Mullâ Sadrâ's, one often faces the problem of verification which implies the verification of method.[30] Therefore, in the analysis of the topics and issues, a variety of methodologies will be used, each of which is suited to some aspect of Mullâ Sadrâ's philosophy.

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[1] The two Arabic words *al-ʻilm* and *al-maʻrifa* mean knowledge. The usage of these two terms, as well as other words such as *al-ʻirfân, al-shuʻûr* and *al-'idrâk*, in various Islamic fields (e.g., philosophy, theology,

mysticism, logic) have been considered and examined by Muslim thinkers in several perspectives and technical senses. It seems that "there was no real difference between *al-ma'rifa* and *al-'ilm* at the earliest stages of Muslim metaphysical thought, and the same would seem to be valid for mysticism. Later, however, despite the continued usage of *al-'ilm* and the fact that some mystical authors placed this kind of knowledge above *al-ma'rifa*, the latter became "a term expressive of the distinctive essence of mysticism." Later too, Gnostic knowledge (*al-ma'rifa*) became the preserve of the saints alone." Jan Richard Netton, *Al-Farabi and His School* (London & New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 33. See also Franz Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant: The Concept of Knowledge in Medieval Islam* (Leiden:E.J. Brill, 1970), pp. 164-8,202-3.

[2] M. Mutahharî, *Sharh-i Mabsût-i Manzûmah*, vol. 1 (Tehran: Intishârât-i Hikmat, 1984), pp. 255-8.

[3] From here on I will give the dates both in the Islamic and Christian calendar that are roughly six hundred years apart.

[4] I mean here by epistemology, or the theory of knowledge, the branch of philosophy which is concerned with the nature and scope of knowledge, its presuppositions and basis, and the general reliability of claims to knowledge. For more details see: D. W. Hamlyn, "History of Epistemology," in *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), vol.3, p.8.

[5] There is a treatise of Nasîr al-Dîn Tûsî, written in Arabic, entitled *Sharhi Mas'alah al-'Ilm* (the description of the problem of knowledge) in which the author explains and analyses several aspects of knowledge. However, he doesn't approach the skeptical objections which threaten the very foundations of knowledge. See: Tûsî, *Sharhi Mas'alah al-'Ilm* (Mashhad: Matba'ah Jâmi'ah, 1966), pp. 18-46.

[6] M. T. Mesbah Yazdi, *Ta'lîqah* (Tehran: Intishârât-i al-Zahrâ, 1984), p. 84.

[7] M. Mutahharî, *Sharh-i Mabsût-i Manzûmah* (Tehran: Intishârât-i Hikmat, 1984), vol. 1, pp. 255-8.

[8] For further information about the development of Islamic philosophy see: F. Rahman, "Islamic philosophy," *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. P. Edwards, vol. 4 (New York, London: Macmillan, 1967), pp. 219-224; S.H. Nasr, "Mullâ Sadrâ," *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, vol. 5, p. 412; *Sadr al-Dîn Shîrâzî and His Transcendent Theosophy*, pp. 85-94; Majid Fakhrî,

A History of Islamic Philosophy (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), pp. 341-46.

[9] In this regard, Nasr states: "Sadr al-Dîn Mohammad al-Shîrâzî (979-1050/1571-1640), commonly known as Mullâ Sadrâ, is the greatest philosopher-theosopher of the Safavid period in Iran." For more information of his time, as well as his intellectual personality see: S.H. Nasr, *Islamic Life and Thought* (London: Boston, Allen & Unwin, 1981), pp. 158-181; "The Metaphysics of Sadr al-Dîn Shîrâzî and Islamic Philosophy in Qajar Iran," in *Qajar Iran*, ed. by E. Bosworth (California, 1992), pp. 177-98; "Theology, philosophy and spirituality," in *Islamic Spirituality*, ed. S.H.Nasr (N.Y., 1991); F. Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullâ Sadrâ* (Albany, SUNY Press, 1976); M. Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy* (N.Y., 1970), pp. 339-46. In the present work, Sadr al-Dîn al-Shîrâzî is often referred to as Mullâ Sadrâ or Sadr al-Muta`allihîn (the head of theosophers).

[10] For further information about Mullâ Sadrâ's life see: M. Khânsâr*î, Rawdât al-Jannât*, vol. II (Tehran, 1306 A.H. Lunar), pp. 331-32; M. Al-Hurr al-'Amilî, *Amal al-Amil*, p. 58 (noted by Muhammad Qumî); with regard to modern studies concerning Mullâ Sadrâ's life see A. Zanjânî, *al-Faylasûf al-Fârsî al-Kabîr sadr al-Dîn al-Shîrâzî* (Damascus, 1936); A.M. Ma'sûmî, "Sadr al-Dîn Shîrâzî," *Indo-Iranîca,* vol. XIV, no. 4 (December, 1961), pp. 27-42 (of Persian Arabic section); S.J.Ashtiyânî, *Sharh Hâl wa Arâ`-i Falsafîy-i Mullâ Sadrâ* (Mashad, 1961), pp. 112-145; S.H.Nasr (ed.), *Mullâ Sadrâ commemoration* (Tehran, 1961); *Sadr al-Dîn Shîrâzî and his Transcendent Theosophy* (Tehran, 1978). pp. 31-39; "Sadr dl-Dîn Shîrâzî (Mullâ Sadrâ), His life, Doctrines and Significance," *Indo-Iranica*, vol. XIV, no. 4 (December, 1961), pp. 6-16; E.G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, vol. IV (New York: Scribner's Sons,1902), pp. 429-30.

[11] F. Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullâ Sadrâ* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1976), p. 8.

[12] For more detail see: S.H.Nasr, *Islamic Life and Thought*, pp. 158-68; Qarâ`î, "Post-Ibn Rushd Islamic Philosophy in Iran," *Al-Tawhid,* vol. III, no. 3 (April-June, 1986), pp. 37-45.

[13] Mullâ Sadrâ was a prolific writer. In addition to his great work, the *Asfâr*, he wrote over forty books and treatises. For further information see: introduction by editor of the *Asfâr*, M. R. Muzaffar; S. H. Nasr, *Sadr al-Dîn Shîrâzî and his Transcendent Theosophy* (Tehran: 1978), pp. 39-50;

S. J. Ashtîyânî, *Sharhi hâl wa ârâ`i Falsafîye Mullâ Sadrâ* , (Tehran: Nihzat-i Zanân-i Musalmân, 1981), pp. 45-71; F. Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullâ Sadrâ* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1976), pp. 16-20.

[14] S. H. Nasr, "Existence (wujûd) and Quiddity (mahîyyah) in Islamic Philosophy," *International Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. XXIX, no. 4, Issue no. 119 (1989), pp. 419-20.

[15] For an introductory survey of the Suhrawardian position see: S.H. Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages* (Delmar, N.Y.: Caravan Books, 1976), pp. 52-82; "Shihâb al-Dîn Suhrawardî Maqtûl," *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, ed. M.M. Sharif, vol. I (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1963), pp. 372-98.

[16] M. Aminrazavi, *Suhrawardî's Theory of Knowledge*, Ph.D. Diss., (Philadelphia, Temple University, 1989), pp. 16-17.

[17] We can find this basic principle in both Suhrawardian philosophical system and Mullâ Sadrian system of thought. See above, n. 15; and below, n. 19.

[18] Corbin calls Mullâ Sadrâ's transformation of earlier Islamic philosophy a "revolution." He writes "Mullâ Sadrâ opère une révolution qui détrône la véritable métaphysique de l'essence, dont le règne durait depuis des siècles, depuis Fârâbî, Avicenne et Sohrawardî." *Le livre des pénétrations métapysiques* (Lagrasse, France: Verdier, 1988), p. 62.

[19] In this regard see: S. H. Nasr, *Islamic Life and Thought*, pp. 158-181. Nasr has considered and elucidated the importance of Mullâ Sadrâ as "a source for knowledge of the earlier schools of Islamic philosophy and the history of Islamic philosophy in general."

[20] S.H. Nasr, *Islamic Life and Thought* (London, Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1981), p. 164.

[21] For more detail of his influence on Islamic philosophy see: S. H. Nasr, "The Metaphysics of Sadr al-Dîn Shîrâzî," in *Qajar Iran*, ed. by E. Bosworth (California, 1992), pp. 177-198; F. Rahman, *The philosophy of Mullâ Sadrâ* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1976), pp. 13-16.

[22] *Asfâr* (Bairut: Dâr Ihyâ` al-Turâth al-'Arabî, 1990), book I, part 3, pp. 294.

[23] Ibid., I/1, pp. 116-9.

[24] The greatest influence on Mullâ Sadrâ's doctrines is that of Suhrawardî, the founder of the Illuminationist school of thought. Mullâ Sadrâ wrote

a commentary on Suhrawardî's *Hikmat al-Ishrâq*, partly criticizing, rejecting or modifying him, and partly accepting and supporting him in several places. On Suhrawardî and his influence on Mullâ Sadrâ see: S. H. Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages,* Suhrawardî's part; M. Fakhri, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, pp. 326-344; F. Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullâ Sadrâ* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1976), Introduction.

[25] For more details see: F. Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullâ Sadrâ* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1976), pp. 210-246; S. M. R. Hejazi, "Being and Knowledge in Mullâ Sadrâ's Philosophy," read paper (N.Y., 1992).

[26] On the significance of his ontological views see: M. Abdul Haq, "Mullâ Sadrâ's concept of being," *Islamic Studies*, vol. VI, no. 3 (September, 1967), pp. 267-276; S. H. Nasr, *Islamic Life and Thought*, pp. 174-181; "Existence (wujûd) and Quiddity (mahîyyah) in Islamic Philosophy," *International Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. XXIX, no. 4, Issue no. 119 (1989), pp. 419-20; F. Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullâ Sadrâ* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1976), pp. 27-44.

[27] The problem of ontology and the meaning and reality of existence has been treated so thoroughly and so systematically in this philosophy that the whole area of this philosophy is characterized by the sense of existence. Mullâ Sadrâ devoted the whole of the first book of his *Asfâr* to the discussion of *wujûd* (existence) to which he returned in several of his other works. See also F. Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullâ Sadrâ* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1976), pp. 27-44.

[28] According to the list of Mullâ Sadrâ's works given by M. R. Muzaffar, the editor of *Asfâr* (Tehran, 1958), in his Introduction (p. 16) to the work, Mullâ Sadrâ wrote 32 or 33 treatises altogether. In one sense, his works may be divided into the purely philosophical and the religious; and, in another way, they may divided into original works and commentaries on earlier philosophical writings, the most important being his commentaries on the metaphysics of Ibn Sînâ's *al-Shifâ`* and Suhrawardî's *Hikmat al-Ishrâq*.

[29] The full title of Mullâ Sadrâ's multivolume work written in Arabic is *al-hikmat al-muta'âlîya Fî al-Asfâr al-'Aqlîyat al-Arba'a* (The Transcendent Wisdom of the Four Intellectual Journeys of the Soul) first lithographed in 1865 (1282 A. H. lunar) almost 225 years after his death. For detailed information about parts of four journeys of *Asfâr* see: S. H. Nasr, *Sadr*

al-Dîn Shîrâzî and his Transcendent Theosophy (Tehran, 1978), pp. 55-60.

[30] For instance, in *Asfâr*, Mullâ Sadrâ usually employs an especial method in which he has first discussed the views of various schools and then synthesized the different doctrines into a unity which seeks to encompass them.

PART ONE

Knowledge

Definition and Division

CHAPTER 1

The Definition of Knowledge

I. General

Is knowledge definable? If it is so, how can we define knowledge, concerning the concept and the nature of knowledge? These were earlier identified as two of the most basic epistemological questions which could be asked. Numerous answers have been given down the ages and diverse aspects of the same problem have been surveyed at various times. These two questions have been central problems in the history of epistemological philosophy. An understanding of the concept of knowledge, as well as its nature, is a prerequisite for embarking upon any attempt to answer other epistemological questions.

Most philosophers have had something to say about the nature of knowledge, although many have taken its nature for granted.[1] Some philosophers, regarding the former question, maintain that knowledge is not definable and, therefore, they believe that the original definition of knowledge is rendered circular or tautological. Some of them, by contrast, under the impression that its definition is possible,

have asserted several definitions of knowledge, by a very different route. In this regard, we can also find the same story in the history of Islamic philosophy, theology and mysticism.[2]

Since knowledge of any sort is the foundation of every philosophical argument, it is natural to discuss at first the concept, essence (nature), and kinds of knowledge. In Western philosophy, the theory of knowledge has been a central problem in philosophy from the earliest times.[3] In Islamic philosophy, the problem of knowledge, its definition, divisions, and sources have been highly considered by Muslim philosophers. Muslim theologians (*mutakallimîn*) also discuss at first the essence and kinds of knowledge.[4]

Muslim philosophers and theologians, however, taking it for granted that knowledge of nature is possible, differ with regard to whether or not the definition of knowledge is logically possible.[5]

II. The concept and the nature of knowledge

It is generally accepted that, in the case of definition or description of "knowledge," there are two sides that might be separately considered: the concept and the nature of knowledge. Logically, any kind of definition dealt with the nature of "knowledge" should be preceded by an examination of the concept of knowledge. Yet, it is taken for granted that the concept of knowledge is self-evident (*al-badîhî*).[6] However, one might ask whether a proposition expressing the concept of knowledge defended as being self-evident, entails the

proposition expressing the essence (nature) of knowledge defended as being self-evident as well.

On the other hand, with respect to the definition of knowledge, Muslim thinkers have had recourse to two kinds of technical terms: evaluative and (or) descriptive terms.[7] However, it is evident that their investigation of the nature of knowledge occurs within the framework of a general metaphysical theory. Unfortunately, none of them adequately clarifies the nature of the specific coherence between external and internal world or, in other words, between object and subject in any kind of knowledge. So, the distinction between subjective and objective conceptions of reality remains in need of much clarification.[8]

It should be considered that, assuming that the thinkers' analysis is correct and complete as an analysis of the concept of knowledge, knowing the correct analysis of the concept of knowledge is not sufficient for knowing the complete essence of knowledge. Some may hold that, though we can know the content of the concept of knowledge, we do not (or we cannot) know the complete essence of knowledge. Hence, conceptual analysis is insufficient for determining the complete essential nature of knowledge.

On the concept of knowledge (*al-'ilm* or *al-ma'rifa*),[9] if it is logically accepted that the subject matter of a science could be known either by an acquired concept or by a self-evident one,[10] it is obvious and generally admitted that the concept of knowledge is self-evident. In one sense, understanding the concept of knowledge self-evidently means

that we know what knowing is or what the word "know" means; for we know how to use the word correctly. Traditionally, one who scans through the pages of the history of Islamic philosophy will surely come across the fact that most, if not all, of Muslim philosophers[11] strenuously maintained that the concept of knowledge is primitive and indefinable; thus it is self-evident.[12]

On the nature of knowledge, there are two major doctrines among Muslim thinkers; whether knowledge is a kind of quiddity (*mâhîyyah*) or a kind of existence (*nahwun min al-wujûd*). For whom knowledge is quiddity, its genus is either quality (*al-kaifîya*) or relation (*al-idhâfa* or *al-nisbat*), or affection (*al-infi'âl*). Concerning these different doctrines, Muslim thinkers have asserted diverse definitions of knowledge.[13]

Suhrawardî (d. 587/1191), founding his philosophical system on light, holds that our knowledge is not in the first place mediated by concepts but occurs presently by a direct relation with its object. Our conceptual knowledge is once or twice removed from the thing.[14] Considering the distinction between concept and reality, Suhrawardî and his follower, Qutb al-Dîn Shîrâzî (d. 710/1310), have made a sharp and consistent distinction between the structure of the conceptual world and the structure of the real world.[15]

According to Mullâ Sadrâ (d. 1050/1640), knowledge is not logically definable, for logical definition is in terms of genus and species which are two kinds of quiddity (*mâhîyah*), while

the nature of knowledge is a kind of existence (*nahwun min al-wujûd*).[16]

For both either Suhrawardî, who defines knowledge as a kind of being manifest (*al-zuhûr*), or Mullâ Sadrâ, who identifies knowledge as a kind of existence (*al-wujûd*), grasping the real existence of the realities is the main goal of their proposed epistemological system.[17] In this regard, Suhrawardî rejects the Peripatetic theory of definition and establishes his own theory. Suhrawardî, in the critique of the Peripatetics, argues that the Peripatetic approach to definition makes it impossible to know the reality of anything, and in his own logic he substitutes a theory of definition based on direct knowledge (*al-ʻilm al-hudûrî*) of things.[18] He also uses a theory of vision based on simple presence in place of Peripatetic theories requiring an intermediate entity. His theory of vision, as we shall see, has explicitly been rejected by Mullâ Sadrâ.

III. The definition of knowledge

On definition of knowledge, many different propositions are cited.[19] When we examine and peruse these definitions, we will find that in most of them, if not all, some technical terms, such as *al-maʻrifat* (knowledge), *al-idrâk* (perception), *al-iʻtiqâd* (belief), *al-tayaqqun* (certainty), and *al-sûrat* (form) are employed. These terms, in turn, should be described and logically defined by the term of *al-ʻilm* (knowledge). For this reason, someone may hold that the

original definition of knowledge is rendered circular. For instance, al-Râzî (d.606/1209)[20] asserts that the definition of knowledge by both real definition (*al-hadd*) and descriptive definition (*al-rasm*) is impossible, and there is nothing more evident than *al-ʿilm* (knowledge).[21]

Mullâ Sadrâ also, at the very beginning of his discussion about knowledge, states that *al-ʿilm* (knowledge) is not definable, for everything is appearing and manifested before *al-ʿaql* (intellect) by *al-ʿilm* (knowledge), hence, it is not possible that knowledge itself be appearing or manifested by something else.[22]

This allegation which indicates logical circularity might be, however, denied with the argument that there is an obvious difference between the concept of knowledge which is examined by thinkers defining and describing it, and the existence of knowledge which entails the appearance and manifestation of everything before the intellect (*al-ʿaql*). Accordingly, the concept of knowledge could be appearing and manifested before the intellect by other concepts without any logical circularity or intellectual contradiction.[23]

That is why philosophers, as well as theologians, who deny the possibility of the definition of knowledge, have offered diverse definitions. Besides, Mullâ Sadrâ himself, asserting the former statement, declares some propositions as definitions or descriptions of knowledge.[24] Mullâ Sadrâ, in this regard, enumerates several views some of which he accepts after necessary modifications, while criticizing and rejecting others. He then formulates and demonstrates his own view.[25]

One view, which is attributed to the Peripatetics by Suhrawardî, defines knowledge, particularly intellectual knowledge, in terms of abstraction or separation from matter. Abstraction here is taken as something negative. Mullâ Sadrâ, following Suhrawardî, rejects this kind of definition. He remarks that whenever we know something, we are aware that knowledge is something positive and we are not aware of any negatives. Moreover, "to be abstract" can never be a translation of "to be knowledge"; that is why it requires a proof to show that all knowledge includes abstraction.[26]

Another definition is to say that knowledge consists in the imprinting of the form of the object in the subject. This is a common definition of knowledge, in which knowledge is considered as an acquired form, being a mediator between subject (knower) and object (known). In analyzing this definition, Mullâ Sadrâ mentions several objections against this view. It is obvious that this is not true of self-knowledge (*al-'ilm bi-dhât*), for it is admitted that self-knowledge does not come about by the imprinting of one's form into oneself. The second objection to this view is that the imprinting of forms in matter does not become knowledge for material bodies.[27]

Suhrawardî, however, accepts this kind of definition at least in some part of knowledge, e.g., knowledge in which the subject knows (or perceives) the object through a form (*mithâl*).[28] Mullâ Sadrâ also, in some cases, confirms this kind of description of knowledge where he asserts that;

> Knowledge is the presence of the forms before the intellect (*al-'aql*).[29]

What we understand from these two statements cited by either Suhrawardî, who defines knowledge as a kind of being manifest (*al-zuhûr*), or Mullâ Sadrâ, who identifies knowledge as a kind of existence (*al-wujûd*), is that, on the one hand, the reality of known object (*ma'lûm*), in some kind of knowledge, could be, according to them, absent of the subject and, on the other hand, knowledge is not restricted to knowledge by presence. Accordingly, some propositions in which Mullâ Sadrâ affirms that every kind of knowledge refers to knowledge by presence should be elucidated.[30]

Suhrawardî, denying all peripatetic definitions, propounds his own definition of knowledge. He seeks to translate the phenomenon of cognition into the terminology of light. In his definition, he uses two technical terms: *al-nûr* (light) and *al-zuhûr* (appearance or being manifest).[31] He asserts that *al-nûr* (light) is manifest to itself and makes other things manifest (*al-nûr zâhirun li-dhâtih wa muzhirun li-ghairih*).[32] He depicts the categories of light as that which is light for itself, and that which is light for something else. The light which is light for itself appears for itself, and it knows itself directly. In sum, the immaterial light knows itself directly, because of the nature of light, and knows the other things through an illuminative relation (*al-idâfah al-ishrâqîyah*).[33] Vision, according to him, happens simply by the presence of a lighted object before a healthy eye and, therefore, it happens by an intuitive illumination for the soul (*ishrâq-un hudûrî-un li-nnafs*).[34]

Mullâ Sadrâ critically treats Suhrawardî's definition of knowledge, confirming some part of his theory and denying the other part. He asserts that his idea about the light being manifest for itself, which is a self-existing and a self-knowing substance, is correct insofar as it identifies true being with knowledge. He, thereafter, having interpreted the light as existence, holds that Suhrawardî's idea, in this part, refers to Mullâ Sadrâ's own selected view, which implies the fact that knowledge is existence (*al-'ilm huwa al-wujûd*).[35]

Regarding the other part of Suhrawardî's theory, Mullâ Sadrâ rejects Suhrawardî's idea through both destructive answer (*al-jawâb al-naqdî*) and constructive answer (*al-jawâb al-hallî*). He declares that the connection (which Suhrawardî posited between the act of vision and an externally subsisting material form) cannot be, since the relation between what has no position (that is, the soul's act of vision) and something having material dimensions (that is, the "object of vision, in their theory) is impossible except by means of something having position. So that even if one should suppose the validity (of their theory of vision) through an intermediary (between the soul and the material object of vision), the relation would not be one of illuminative knowledge, but rather a material and spatial one, since all the activities of material powers and everything which they undergo must be in a spatial location.[36]

Besides, it is not true that those material things which are, according to Suhrawardî, pure darkness (*al-ghawâsiq*), can be known by direct illuminational awareness, like pure body and pure quantity; whereas we believe that, Mullâ Sadrâ adds,

the pure body cannot be the object of one's perception or intellection. Since what is material, like pure body, is able to be divided in different directions and each direction is absent from the others, hence it is absent from itself, let alone from the other things.[37] With respect to this objection he affirms;

> For it has been proven that this mode of shadowy and material being is veiled from itself by itself. So with regard to this (material) mode (of being), the presence (of a material thing) is precisely the same as its absence from itself; its coherence is the same as its separability; its unity is the same as its potential multiplicity; and its conjunction is the same as divisibility. [38]

Elsewhere, he holds that, "what is in the external materials is not the sort of thing that can be connected in essence with perception, nor can it be present immediately in perception and have being in consciousness."[39]

Mullâ Sadrâ, examining and criticizing the other definitions, both Peripatetics and illuminatives, propounds his own definition of knowledge:

> Knowledge is neither a privation like abstraction from matter, nor a relation but being (*wujûd*). (it is) not every being but that which is an actual being (*bil-fi'l*), not potential (*bil-quwwah*). (It is) not even every actual being, but a pure being (*wujûdan khâlisan*), unmixed with non-being (*al-'adam*). To the extent that it becomes free from an admixture of non-being, its intensity as knowledge increases.[40]

This statement frankly elucidates that his investigation of the nature of knowledge occurs within the framework of a

general metaphysical theory. Knowledge, according to him, is pure existence and free from matter. Mullâ Sadrâ, therefore, has based his theory of knowledge on two prime bases: one of them is a very fundamental principle of his philosophical system, the principiality of existence (*asâlat al-wujûd*). On this point, there is a deep gap between Suhrawardî's illuminative system and Mullâ Sadrian philosophy. Suhrawardî is the most relentless critic of the doctrine of the reality of existence and the pioneer of the doctrine that essence is the sole reality and existence a mental abstraction.[41]

For Suhrawardî, according to Mullâ Sadrâ's interpretation, essence or quiddity (*al-mâhîyah*) is principial (*asîl*) and, therefore, existence (*al-wujûd*) cannot be regarded as a real attribute of essence; because if existence were realized in a determined (realm), then it would be existent and would also have existence. Its existence would have existence and so on ad infinitum (in a vicious regress).[42] Mullâ Sadrâ, answering the objections raised by Suhrawardî, demonstrates the principiality of existence. For Mullâ Sadrâ, existence is the corner stone of both his philosophical system (*al-hikmah al-muta'âlîyah*) and epistemological theory.[43] According to him the nature of knowledge does not pertain to quiddity (*al-mâhîyah*), which has "never inhaled the perfume of real existence at all."[44] He insists on the fact that the nature of knowledge is a form of "existence" (*nahwun min al-wujûd*).[45]

The second prime basis in Mullâ Sadrian theory of knowledge is immateriality of knowledge (*tajarrud al-'ilm*). This is a view acceptable to both Suhrawardî, who defines

knowledge through his terminology of light, and Mullâ Sadrâ, who has defined knowledge on the basis of the prime principle of his philosophy (*asâlat al-wujûd*). In the following chapter, the problem of immateriality of knowledge will be pursued, concentrating upon Suhrawardîan and Mullâ Sadrian arguments.

Mullâ Sadrâ, using these two principles, has offered a unique definition of knowledge which shows a very close relationship between existence and knowledge in his epistemological system. It must be stated at this juncture that Mullâ Sadrâ has based his theory of knowledge on the reality of existence, rather than on a concept of something which is itself absent from the mind. Hence, according to him, direct, intuitive experience is the only way to know the reality of knowledge. [46]

It might be said, however, that this kind of definition is, at least at first glance, both too vague and too broad, because, on the one hand, any sort of definition or description should include all kinds of its sub-divisions. On the other hand, the definition, even though it is not real definition, should explicitly clarify and identify the subject. Assuming the correctness and completeness of Mullâ Sadrâ's analysis of the definition of knowledge, the next step would be to confirm the fact as to which kind of quiddity (*al-mâhîyah*) we can abstract from the existence of knowledge, at least some kind of knowledge. For this kind of existence is contingent (*mumkin*), and every contingent, as it is demonstrated by philosophers, is a combined pair (*kullu mumkinin zawjun tarkîbî*) from quiddity

and existence.[47] To answer this question there are diverse ideas whether its quiddity is quality (*al-kaifîya*), or relation (*al-idâfa*), or relational quality (a*l-kaifîya zât al-idâfa*), or something else.[48]

In comparing the definition of our two sages, specially on knowledge by presence, it might be remarked that Mullâ Sadrâ reached much the same rationalist and intuitive conclusion as Suhrawardî, although by a very different route. The technical term, manifest (*zâhir*), is the corner stone of Suhrawardî's definition while for Mullâ Sadrâ, the reality of existence is the sole reality of knowledge. In sum, regarding these two ontological-intuitive definitions, one might conclude the following formula demonstrating a synthesis of Sadrîan-Suhrawardîan theory:

> Existence (*wujûd*) = Presence (*hudûr*) = Manifestation (*zuhûr*)

However, it is intelligible that both Suhrawardî and Mullâ Sadrâ have developed their idea of knowledge on the basis of intuitive experience.

In our discussion so far, examining different views about the definition of knowledge, it has become clear that, in approaching the definition of knowledge, several aspects should be considered. Knowledge is a kind of existence (*nahwun min al-wujûd*), as Mullâ Sadrâ remarks; and manifestation or appearance (*zuhûr*) is a prime character of this kind of existence, as Suhrawardî asserts. In addition, since knowledge has several kinds and levels, its existence has its own identity in each case, which has each time its specific

characters, e.g., it is pure existence in "self-knowledge" (*'ilm al-dhât bi-al-dhât*) but, in some cases, such quiddities as quality, relation, or relational quality have been abstracted from its existence. Therefore, it is plausible to conclude that, in their definitions of knowledge, Muslim thinkers, each in his turn, indicate some aspects of knowledge, ignoring or considering the other aspects. But in a complete definition we should, as mentioned before, bear in mind all aspects.

[1] D. W. Hamlyn, "History of Epistemology," in *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), vol. 3, p. 10.

[2] For instance, in the Muslim world, at least for Fârâbî (d. 339/950) and his successors, knowledge and a theory of knowledge was both possible and necessary. For more information see: I. R. Netton, *Al-Fârâbî and His School*, (London, New York: Rouledge, 1992), p. 88.

[3] "This problem occupies an important place in most major philosophical systems whether philosophy is conceived as an ontological undertaking or a critical inquiry. In modern philosophy in the widest sense of the phrase–i.e., philosophy since the Renaissance– theory of knowledge has usually been the primary field of philosophy." Anthony Quinton, "Knowledge and Belief," in *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), vol. 4, p. 345.

[4] The fact that most, if not all, Muslim theologians have notably discussed diverse aspects of knowledge in their works is obvious from the following passage: "These discussions occupy a position in Islamic

theological manuals, which open by setting out the definition and meaning of knowledge in its various kinds, e.g., al-Bâqillanî, *Tamhîd*; al-Baghdâdî, *Usûl*; al-`Ijî, *al-Mawâqif*. B. Abrahamou, "Necessary Knowledge in Islamic Theology," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 21, no.1 (1993), Exeter, p.20.

[5] Unlike Western philosophers, Muslim thinkers, insofar as I have discovered, have not seriously approached the problem of possibility or impossibility of the nature of knowledge. They took it for granted that knowledge of nature was possible. In other words, the existence of knowledge was not considered as a serious problem in their epistemological system, but it was evident for them that the existence of knowledge was necessary and did not need any logical demonstration. See: Shams al-Dîn Bukhârî, *Sharhi Hikmah al-'Ain*, p. 305; M. H. Tabâtabâ'î, *Nihâyat al-Hikmah*, (Tehran: Intishârât-i al-Zahrâ, 1984), p.193; M. T. Mesbâh Yazdî, in his *Ta'lîqah* on *Nihâyat al-Hikma* (Tehran: Intishârât-i al-Zahrâ, 1984), p. 193.

[6] See below, nn. 11,12.

[7] Ibn Sînâ (d. 428/1037) for instance, in his survey of the knowledge of The First (*al-Awwal*), asserts that this kind of knowledge is better (*afdal*); and Tûsî (d. 672/1273), the commentator, elucidates and evaluates several kinds of knowledge, using some evaluative terms. See: *al-Ishârât wa al-Tanbîhât* (Tehran: Matba'a Haidarî, 1958), vol. 3, pp. 710-11.

[8] This is a very basic problem in epistemology and I hope, by and by, I shall approach this problematic issue, concerning two different metaphysical methods: intellectual and intuitive.

[9] Both terms *al-'ilm* and *al-ma'rifa* are used by the Peripatetics to designate knowledge in the general sense, for which Suhrawardî uses the term *idrâk;* and this has the sense of perception or cognition as a process of knowledge. Ghazzâlî distinguishes between *ma'rifa* as pertinent to *tasdîq*, and *'ilm* as pertinent to *tasawwur.* Ghazzâlî, *Mihak al-Nazar fî al-Mantiq*, ed. al-Na'sânî (Beirut, 1966), pp. 8-10.

[10] J. Walbridge, *The Science of Mystic Lights* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 44.

[11] It has been said that "the majority of theologians subscribe to the view that "knowledge" is definable and consequently they postulate a variety

of definitions." A. Al-Oraibi, *Shî'î Renaissance*, Ph.D. thesis (McGill University, 1992), p. 74.

[12] Mullâ Sadrâ Shîrâzî, *Asfâr*, I/3, p. 278; M. H. Tabâtabâ'î, *Nihâyat al-Hikma*, (Tehran: Intishârât-i al-Zahrâ, 1984), p. 193; M. T. Mesbah Yazdi, *Ta'lîqa 'alâ Nihâyat al-Hikma*, (Tehran: Intishârât-i al-Zahrâ, 1984), p. 193. Mesbâh holds that the existence of knowledge is necessary (*darûrî*), for the existence of everything would be demonstrated by it, and the concept of knowledge is self-evident (*badîhî*), hence its definition is impossible.

[13] Sabzavârî (d.1289/1878) quotes different opinions about "knowledge," as to whether its "genus" is "quality," as is commonly held, or "relation," as has been held by Fakhr Râzî, or "affection," as some have held. He, asserting several degrees for knowledge, holds that some kinds of knowledge are qualities relating to the soul, and some of it are not qualities. M. Mohaghegh and T. Izutsu (trans. and eds.), *The Metaphysics of Sabzavârî* (New York: Caravan Books, 1977), pp. 210-11.

[14] *Sharh Hikmat al-Ishrâq* (Tehran: Chap-i Sangî, 1913), pp. 38-9, 295-6.

[15] J. Walbridge, *The Science of Mystic Lights*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992),pp. 83-84. The author adds: "This conceptual system, however, was not arbitrary but had a systematic relation to experience and reality. The program of Qutb al-Dîn's first philosophy is the exploration of this conceptual structure, its relation to reality, and the structure of reality insofar as it relates to the secondary intelligibles that are correlates of all our thoughts."

[16] *Asfâr*, I/3, pp. 278-99, 382-3; *Mafâtîh al-Ghaib* (Tehran: Mu`assisa Mutâli'ât wa Tahqîqât-i Farhangî, 1986), pp. 108-110. For more information on Mullâ Sadrâ's concept of *wujûd* and *mâhîyah* see: S.J. Ashtîyânî, *Hastî az Nazar-i Falsafa wa 'Irfân*, pp. 63-95; F. Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullâ Sadrâ*, pp. 27-58; S. H. Nasr, "Existence (*wujud*) and Quiddity (*mahiyyah*) in Islamic Philosophy," *International Philosophical Quarterly,* vol. XXIX, no.4, Issue no. 119 (1989), pp. 409-28.

[17] On the contrary, for the Peripatetics like Fârâbî the reality of thing is not obtainable because man, according to him, cannot grasp the reality of an object; and he is able to know its properties (*khawâss*) and accidents (*a'râd*). Fârâbî, al-Rasâ`il, *al-Ta'lîqât* (Haidar Abâd, 1914), pp. 130,141.

Ibn Sînâ also, in some of his works, gives us the same statement. See Ibn Sinâ, *Al-Ta'lîqât* (p. 82).

[18] *Sharh Hikmat al-Ishrâq*, pp. 38-9. For a full discussion of Suhrawardî's examination of the problem "definition" see: H. Ziai, *Knowledge and Illumination* (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1990), pp. 77-135.

[19] al-Jurjânî (d. 808/1405) quotes several definition under the title of *al-'ilm* (knowledge) and states his own selected definition as following: " knowledge is a certain belief which corresponds to the reality." *Al-Ta'rîfât* (Beirut: Maktaba Lubnân, 1990), p. 160. Among theologians, al-`Ijî (d. 756/1355), on definition of knowledge, mentions several impressions some of which are: 1. al-Râzî's opinion: knowledge is necessary, *darûrî* (therefore, it doesn't need any definition). 2. al-Juvainî's and al-Ghazzâlî's point of view: knowledge is not necessary, but its definition is very difficult. 3. For the rest of Muslim thinkers it is speculative, *nazarî* or acquired, *muktasab*. Then he quotes different definitions and, finally, selects his accepted one. *Al-Mawâqif*, pp. 9-11.

[20] Muhammad ibn 'Omar Fakhr al-Dîn al-Râzî is one of the most important Ash'arite theologians who was among the first to systematize Islamic theology on a philosophical basis. Fazlur Rahman asserts that al-Râzî, being Mullâ Sadrâ's most persistent target, wielded great influence on the subsequent philosophical tradition in Islam. F. Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullâ Sadrâ,* p. 8.

[21] F. Razî, *al-Mabâhith al-Mashriqîyah* (Beirut: Dâr al-Kitâb al-'Arabî, 1990), pp. 450-3.

[22] Mullâ Sadrâ, *Asfâr*, I/3, p. 278.

[23] Sabzavârî has paid attention to this point in his commentary on Mullâ Sadrâ's *Asfâr*, I/3, p.278.

[24] *Asfâr*, I/1, p.116; part 3, pp. 286,297,354; *Mafâtîh al-Ghaib*, p. 108. It could be mentioned here that the propositions which are offered as the definitions of knowledge are not logically the definitions of knowledge, for it has been cited that, on the one hand, the logical definition consists of genus and species and, on the other hand, there is no genus and species for the nature of "knowledge." Hence, these propositions seem to be merely as *sharh-ul-ism*; or, as Mullâ Sadrâ mentions, these are propounded as the admonitions and explanations implying clarity and plainness. *Asfâr*, I/3, p. 278.

[25] *Asfâr*, I/3, pp. 278-99; *Mafâtîh al-Ghaib*, (Tehran: Mu`ssasa Mutâli'ât wa Tahqîqât-i Farhangî, 1986), pp. 108-110. See also F. Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullâ Sadrâ*, pp. 210-220.

[26] *Asfâr*, I/3, pp. 286,289. For Suhrawardî's objection to this definition see: *Hikmat al-Ishrâq*, p.151. All references here, for Suhrawardî's works such as *Hikmat al-Ishrâq*, *al-Talvîhât*, *al-Mashâri' wa al-Mutârihât*, and *al-Muqâwimât* are to the collection under the title of *Opera metaphysica et mystica*, vol. I & II, ed. Henricus Corbin (Istanbul: Maarif Matbaasi, 1945, 1954).

[27] *Asfâr*, I/3, pp. 288-9.

[28] Suhrawardî, *Hikmat al-Ishrâq*, p. 111. Elsewhere, he remarks that: "perception (*idrâk*) occurs when the idea or form (*mithâl*) of the reality (*haqîqa*) of the thing is obtained by the person, i.e., in the knowing subject." *Hikmat al-Ishrâq*, p. 15 [trans. H. Ziai, *Knowledge and Illumination* (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1990), p. 140].

[29] Mullâ Sadrâ, *Risâla al-Tasawwur wa al-Tasdîq* [ed. in *al-Jawhar al-Nadîd* (Qum: Intishârât-i Bîdâr, 1984) p. 307.

[30] I shall attempt to examine his propositions in the following chapter.

[31] The term manifest as a translation for the technical term *zâhir* has been used by some contemporary writers like J. Walbridge in *The Science of Mystic Light* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992).

[32] *Opera* II, *Hikmat al-Ishrâq*, p.113.

[33] Ibid., pp. 106-8,117.

[34] Ibid., pp. 97-100; *al-Mutârihât*, p. 486. In this regard, Ziai concludes as following: "For Suhrawardî, one does not proceed to know a thing by analyzing it, but by having an intuitive grasp of its total reality and then analyzing the intuition." *Knowledge and Illumination* (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1990), p. 130.

[35] *Asfâr*, I/3, p.291.

[36] Mullâ Sadrâ, *Ta'lîqât* on *Sharh Hikmat al-Ishrâq* (Tehran: Chap-i Sangî, 1913), pp. 270-274; *al-'Arshîya*, p. 237 [trans. by J. W. Morris, *The Wisdom of The Throne* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981) pp. 136].

[37] *Asfâr*, I/3, pp. 291-2; *Ta'lîqât* on *Sharh Hikmat al-Ishrâq*, pp. 268-274; *al-'Arshîyah*, p. 225.

[38] *al-'Arshîyah*, p. 225 (trans. by J. W. Morris, *The Wisdom of The Throne* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981) pp. 107-8).

[39] Ibid., p. 237. Morris here declares that, "Sadra's primary concern here is to clarify the *ontological* implication of Suhrawardî's theory with regard to the true nature of soul; he does not claim to outline an adequate alternative account of vision (or any other sense) on the level of physical or psychological theory." (P. 136, n. 83). However, it might be said that, although Mullâ Sadrâ here does not offer the alternative theory of vision, he demonstrates his own account in several places of his works. We shall examine Mullâ Sadrâ's theory, as well as his criticizing Suhrawardî's doctrine, in the following chapter.

[40] *Asfâr*, I/3, p. 297 [trans. by F. Rahman in *The Philosophy of Mullâ Sadrâ* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1975), p. 213].

[41] F. Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullâ Sadrâ* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1975), p. 32.

[42] For Mullâ Sadrâ's interpretation of Suhrawardî's concept see: *Asfâr*, I/1, pp. 38-45; *Ta'lîqât* on *Sharh Hikmat al-Ishrâq*, pp. 182-192; *al-Mashâ'ir,* trans. and ed. P. Morewedge (New York: SSIPS, 1992), pp. 22-33. For Suhrawardî's own idea see: *Opera II, Hikmat al-Ishrâq*, pp. 64-6; *Opera I, al-Talwîhât*, pp. 22-3.

[43] Mullâ Sadrâ, in his major work, has devoted four chapters to the discussion of the principiality of existence. He mentions some views, their objections, and answers one by one. Finally, he demonstrates his own doctrine by several arguments. *Asfâr*, I/1, pp. 38-74.

[44] Mullâ Sadrâ, *al-Mashâ'ir*, trans. and ed. P. Morewedge (New York: SSIPS, 1992), p.43.

[45] See above, n. 16.

[46] *al-Mashâ'ir*, pp. 30,43,63. Although the same theory had a background in the illuminative doctrine of Suhrawardî.

[47] Mullâ Sadrâ, *al-Mashâ'ir*, p. 12.

[48] Ibn Sînâ (d. 428/1037) somewhere describes knowledge as relational quality, and elsewhere, as spiritual quality or simple relation. *al-Ishârât*, vol. 2, pp. 319-24, 334-62; vol. 4, pp. 710-16.

CHAPTER 2

The Division of Knowledge

Al-ʿilm al-husûlî & Al-ʿilm al-hudûrî

In the analysis of the theory of knowledge, the terms "subject" and "object" have the primary role, regarding the process of knowledge. The term "subject" indicates the mind (or any other substituting term) that fulfills the act of knowledge through knowing something, while the term "object" refers to the thing known by that subject. The object therefore has a share, together with the subject, in the construction of the act of knowing.

The distinction between "knowing subject" and "object known," however, is the accepted one so far. From this distinction (or, in other words, dualism of "subject" and "object"), some epistemological problems such as justification and correspondence will arise. Moreover, some divisions of knowledge like its division into *al-ʿilm al-hudûrî* and *al-ʿilm al-husûlî* pertain to this dualism as well.

Muslim thinkers have divided knowledge (*al-ʿilm*) into several divisions, considering ontological perspectives and epistemological aspects.[1] In this regard, Mullâ Sadrâ, in his master work *Asfâr*, has allocated several chapters to the

discussion of knowledge's divisions.[2] Nevertheless, he declares that *al-'ilm* (knowledge) could not be the object of divisions, for, he argues, knowledge is a kind of *wujûd* (existence), and *wujûd* is not genus (*al-jins*) nor species (*al-fasl*) by means of which a thing is to be logically divided.

Therefore, all kinds of divisions which have been cited by philosophers refer in reality to the "known" (*al-ma'lûm*), not to "knowledge" itself. He adds that the "known" is united with the "knowledge" in the same way as "quiddity" is united with "existence."[3]

Sometimes Mullâ Sadrâ divides knowledge into *al-'ilm al-husûlî* (formal, empirical, or conceptual knowledge)[4] and *al-'ilm al-hudûrî* (knowledge by presence or intuitive knowledge).[5] This classification was elaborated before Mullâ Sadrâ by Suhrawardî and Mîr Dâmâd among others. This terminology was also used by the Sûfîs along with the terms *kashf* and *wijdân* (intuition and inspiration).[6]

At other times, Mullâ Sadrâ, following the Peripatetic system, classifies knowledge as *al-hissî* (sensory), *al-khayâlî* (imaginary), *al-wahmî* (apprehension), and *al-'aqlî* (intellectual). The term used in this classification is *idrâk* (perception),[7] which is more or less taken synonymously with *'ilm* or *ma'rifa* (knowledge), in Mullâ Sadrâ's epistemological system.[8]

This classification could be found in the works of the former philosophers. For instance, Ibn Sînâ, closely followed in this by Tûsî, has divided *al-idrâk* (perception) into above-mentioned four kinds, i.e., *al-hissî*, *al-khayâlî*, *al-wahmî* and *al-'aqlî*.[9] Ibn

Sînâ also considers two kinds of perception: direct and indirect perception,[10] which we will, in our language, consider as *al-ʻilm al-hudûrî* and *al-ʻilm al-husûlî* in the following pages. The division of knowledge into "*al-ʻilm al-husûlî*" (conceptual or empirical knowledge) and "*al-ʻilm al-hudûrî*" (knowledge by presence or intuitive knowledge) will be examined here, taking into account both the Suhrawardian and Sadrian consideration of the issue.

I. Al-ʻilm al-husûlî

Al-ʻilm al-husûlî[11] has been defined as "the knowledge which comes through the form of an object about the very essence of that object in the mind of the subject or the knower."[12] According to this definition, the knower, in this kind of knowledge, becomes acquainted with two things:

(1) the geometrical form or shape of the known object, and

(2) the essence or intrinsic nature of it.

The knowledge of the form and outer shape is the actual required knowledge in *al-ʻilm al-husûlî*, while the knowledge of the external reality is accidental or *bil-ʻarad*.[13]

It is not historically evident who, for the first time in the Muslim world, employed the word "*al-ʻilm al-husûlî*" as a technical term for such a kind of knowledge that would be obtained through a form or concept. However, some related words such as *al-husûl* (occurrence) and *al-iktisâb* (acquisition)

could be found in the logical and philosophical texts of earlier Muslim thinkers, where they are defining "knowledge" (*al-ʻilm*) or "perception" (*al-idrâk*).[14] By using these words, they attempted to define a kind of knowledge which was described as "*al-ʻilm al-husûlî*" in the language of the later thinkers like Mullâ Sadrâ, Sabzavârî, and Tabâtabâ`î. Mullâ Sadrâ, in several places of his works, has employed the term "*al-ʻilm al-husûlî*" for a kind of knowledge which is obtainable through a formal or conceptual mediator.[15]

Therefore, it seems plausibly acceptable that the occurrence or acquisition (*husûl* or *iktisâb*) of a form or a concept is a key principle of the definition of this kind of knowledge (viz., *al-ʻilm al-husûlî*). Consequently, thanks to this kind of knowledge, the subject (*al-ʻâlim*) knows the object (*al-maʻlûm*) through a form (*sûra*, *mithâl*) or a concept (*mafhûm*).[16]

Al-ʻilm al-husûlî is limited to the perpetually changing form of the object. Besides, the knowledge which is obtained through the form, because of the ontological separation between form and its reality, can be either true or untrue knowledge. Also this knowledge is encompassed by the mind of the knower which is colored with the color of possibilities or is liable to doubt and error. So certainly it is a narration of a state of the known object in which it actually is not. Its characters will be examined in the last part of this chapter.

In the case of sense perception, the duality of subject and object causes double objects in front of the subject. On the one hand, there is an external object existing

independently outside of the mind (subject). On the other hand, there is also an object that is present in the existence of the subject. The correspondence of the inner object (or subjective object) with the external object is required in any actual knowledge. Consequently, the relation of knowing with the two objects is entirely different.[17]

Suhrawardî states, following Ibn Sînâ, that 'perception' *(idrâk*), as the most general act of knowing an 'absent thing' (*al-shay' al-ghâ`ib*), occurs when the idea (*mithâl*) of the reality (*haqîqa*) of the thing is obtained by the person, i.e., in the knowing subject.[18]According to him, to know an absent object means that the subject obtains the idea '*mithâl'* of the reality or *haqîqa* of the object. This proposition could be considered as a definition of *al-'ilm al-husûlî,* which occurs only, in Suhrawardî's view, for absent objects. This kind of definition of knowing an external entity which is absent from the subject, however, could be found in the peripatetic works.[19] In this regard, Ibn Sînâ defines the act of perception as following:

> Perceiving a thing means that its quiddity (haqîqa) is represented (mutamaththila) to the perceiver [and] monitored by the [organ] through which he perceives.[20]

Considering this kind of knowledge, Suhrawardî states that there must be a complete correspondence between the 'idea' obtained in the subject , and the object, which is absent from the subject; only such a correspondence shows that knowledge of the thing as-it-is has been obtained.[21] This means that to obtain this kind of knowledge (*al-'ilm al-husûlî*), a kind of correspondence has to be established between the

perception in the subject (i.e. the 'idea') and the object, which is not the case of knowledge by presence (*al-'ilm al-hudûrî*). Suhrawardî's view of intuitive knowledge indicates that the subject's immediate experience of the "presence" of the object determines the validity of knowledge itself; therefore, in knowledge by presence (*al-'ilm al-hudûrî*), there is no absence between subject and object.[22]

Mullâ Sadrâ, following the traditional doctrines, namely Peripatetic and illuminational views, primarily divides knowledge, as it was mentioned above, into *al-'ilm al-husûlî* and *al-'ilm al-hudûrî*. He indicates that, in *al-'ilm al-husûlî*, the reality of the external object of knowledge is absent from the subject and, in its place, a mental existent is at the presence of the subject, known by it directly[23]. Then he states that the mental existence (*al-wujûd al-dhihnî*) of the direct object is thoroughly corresponding with the external existence (*al-wujûd al-khârijî*) of the "absent" object. There isn't any essential difference between these two kinds of something's existence. The only difference is that one existence is mental, and the other is external.[24]

As we have seen, both Suhrawardî and Mullâ Sadrâ declare that, in this kind of knowledge (*al-'ilm al-husûlî*), the form or concept which is known by the mind should be conformable to the real object, i.e., the external reality. They, however, don't elucidate, so far as I could find, the problem that, in the light of their epistemological system, how they can prove the conformity of a mental form with its external existence. The thesis I am putting forward is that although they

strenuously corroborate the necessity of this conformity in true knowledge, the process of adjustment between our mind, as the subject of knowledge, and the external world, as the object of knowledge, has not plausibly been demonstrated by them.

Mullâ Sadrâ's view is that *al-'ilm al-husûlî* also refers ultimately to *al-'ilm al-hudûrî*.[25] This view might be examined in the light of his ontological theory since, in my opinion, it is the key in developing a Sadrian theory of knowledge. His explanation and argumentation of the issue shall be seen in the following pages.

II. Al-'ilm al-hudûrî

The concept of *al-'ilm al-hudûrî* may be found in Plato's idealistic theory of knowledge but is not clearly stated by him. In Aristotle's *epagoge* or induction, the intuitive power of mind is mixed with his idea of the universal residing in the particulars and, therefore, is not clear. It was Plotinus who, for the first time, introduced the two distinct functions of the nous, namely intuitive and discursive.[26] Among the Muslim philosophers Fârâbî and Ibn Sînâ took over this Neoplatonic idea of intuition virtually intact. But Suhrawardî gave it a new interpretation in the light of his famous doctrine of light.[27] In his system, this *hudûr* (presence or intuition) became *zuhûr* or *ishrâq* (manifestation or illumination).[28]

Qutb al-Dîn Shîrâzî (d.710-1311),[29] commenting on Suhrawardî's remarks on the division of knowledge into

conception and assent (*al-tasawwur wa al-tasdîq*), asserts that this division applies to formal knowledge, not to intuitive knowledge, which occurs by the simple presence of the known to the knower. This is the kind of knowledge we have of the Creator, of the celestial intellects, and of our own selves; for it would be absurd to suppose that our self-knowledge is by the mediation of a form.[30] Although Shîrâzî, in this statement, doesn't give us any argument for the knowledge by presence, he corroborates the reality of this kind of knowledge, as well as its several sorts, in the view of illuminationist philosophy.

One can say that the theory of "knowledge by presence" distinguishes illuminationist epistemology in general, and Sadrian doctrine in particular, from the Peripatetic theory of knowledge. This distinction is obvious in several fields of their epistemological system- e.g., in the definition and division of knowledge, and in the theory of Necessary Existent's knowledge.

Suhrawardî, criticizing the Peripatetic theory, demonstrates a special mode of perception which, being called 'seeing' or 'vision' (*mushâhada*), emphasizes intuitive knowledge. In this kind of perception, the subject has an immediate grasp of the object without the mediation of a predicate.[31]

Suhrawardî, holding the view that the knowledge of any absent thing occurs when the idea (*mithâl*) of the reality (*haqîqa*) of the thing is obtained by the person, i.e., in the knowing subject,[32]maintains that there is another kind of knowledge by means of which the essences of things (things as

they are) are obtained. This kind of knowledge is validated by the experience of the 'presence' (*al-hudûr*) of the object. This proposition, as Qutb al-Dîn Shîrâzî argues, signifies 'knowledge based on illumination and presence' *(al-ʻilm al-ishrâqî al-hudûrî),* by means of which an 'illuminationist relation' (*al-idâfa al-ishrâqîya*) is established between the subject and the object, resulting in knowledge of essence.[33] It does not require a conception of the object; it is non-predicative, and it is based on the relation between the 'present' object and the knowing subject. Suhrawardî holds that this method is the most valid way to knowledge.[34]

Qutb al-Dîn Shîrâzî, thereafter, remarks the examples of this kind of knowledge as the following: knowledge of God (*ʻilm al-Bârî),* knowledge of incorporeal separate entities (*ʻilm al-mujarradât al-mufâraqa*), and knowledge of oneself (*al-ʻilm bi-anfusinâ*).[35] Suhrawardî, moreover, maintains that the process of 'seeing' or 'vision' (*al-ibsâr*) also occurs through an 'illuminationist relation' (*al-idâfa al-ishrâqîya*) in which the subject has an immediate grasp of the object without the mediation of a predicate. Therefore, the external objects are at the presence of the knowing subject.[36]

Mullâ Sadrâ also demonstrates, in addition to "*al-ʻilm al-husûlî,*" another kind of knowledge, *al-ʻilm al-hudûrî*, in which the existence of a thing becomes united with the existence of the subject. According to this interpretation, one of the Sadrian famous theories- the existential unity between the knower, the known, and the act of knowing- makes sense.[37]

Mullâ Sadrâ, like Suhrawardî, begins his argumentation on knowledge by presence from "self-knowledge" (*al-'ilm bi-dhât*). He holds that the self knows itself in the manner of knowledge by presence, which is existentially identical with the very being of the self itself. Then he demonstrates another kind of knowledge by presence the arguments of which will be discussed in the following part. Ultimately, he propounds his own developed view that any case of knowledge refers to knowledge by presence.[38] To understand this Sadrian notion better, it will be useful to have a glance at the elements of his description of knowledge by presence.

In his discussion of mental existence (*al-wujûd al-dhihnî*), Mullâ Sadrâ demonstrates the idea that the object known, in any case, will be an immaterial existence presented before the soul, whether the perceived object is a sensitive entity or an intellectual one. Although the external object is the object known in *al-'ilm al-husûlî*, it is an internal existence which is ultimately perceived by the soul. Consequently, all kinds of knowledge (or perception) refer to knowledge by presence.[39] He argues as follows:

> In reality, all that man conceives or perceives–whether through intellection or sensation, and whether in this world or in the other world–are not things separate from his essence and different from his ipseity (that is, his individual being and substance). That which he *essentially* perceives is only existing in his essence, not in something else.[40]

The same doctrine has been accepted by his followers such as Tabâtabâ`î.[41] Having stated the division of knowledge

into *al-ʻilm al-hudûrî* and *al-ʻilm al-husûlî,* Tabâtabâ`î remarks that this division is true at the first simple view, but, in a profound understanding, the "knowledge by correspondence" also refers to the "knowledge by presence".[42] Explaining the reference of "knowledge by correspondence" to the "knowledge by presence", M.T. Mesbah, in his *Gloss* on Tabâtabâ`î's *Nihâyah*, propounds three interpretations for that; and finally selects the third as the best. He states:

> Whatever we assume as knowledge by correspondence (a*l-ʻilm al-husûlî*), which is revealing the objects known by accident (*al-maʻlûmât bi al-ʻarad*), it is in fact knowledge by presence which discovers the objects known by essence (*al-maʻlûmât bi al-dhât*). Knowledge reveals the external objects by a consideration of the intellect (*iʻtibâr-on min al-ʻaql*). Therefore, knowledge by correspondence (*al-ʻilm al-husûlî*) is a consideration that the intellect has to have recourse to.[43]

The language of this passage gives an interpretation which frankly elucidates Mullâ Sadrâ's view of the issue.

In the light of the above discussion, Mullâ Sadrâ's idea of "*al-ʻilm al-husûlî,"* which refers to "*al-ʻilm al-hudûrî*" might be summarized as follows: the mental form, which represents the external reality, can be regarded in two ways: first, it is considered as what is presently known to the soul without any mediation. The existence of the form, in this consideration, is at the present of the soul and, therefore, the soul knows it by presence. In this case, it is called, according to Mullâ Sadrâ, "*al-ʻilm al-hudûrî*." Second, it is considered as what is revealing the

external object. It is, in this consideration, like a mirror which shows the other things and is called "*al-ʻilm al-husûlî*."[44]

III. A characterization of the two kinds of knowledge

Although knowledge has been epistemologicaly divided into *al-ʻilm al-husûlî* and *al-ʻilm al-hudûrî,* there is, as we have seen, an ontological relation between these two sorts of knowledge to the extent that any kind of *al-ʻilm al-husûlî* can be reduced to *al-ʻilm al-hudûrî*. Nevertheless, concerning their distinctive aspect, the following characters might be pointed out:

1. The double object is the essential character of *al-ʻilm al-husûlî* whereas, in al-*ʻilm al-hudûrî,* there is only one object presents to the subject. In other words, there is no mediation in *al-ʻilm al-hudûrî* and, therefore, the subject attains the reality of the object without any intermediary such as form or concept. In *al-ʻilm al-husûlî,* on the contrary, the object is obtainable through a form or a concept.

Consequently, in this kind of knowledge, there are two objects known: the object known by essence (*al-maʻlûm bi-al-dhât*) and the object known by accident (*al-maʻlûm bi-al-ʻarad*).[45] The external reality is the object known by accident since its external reality as it is external cannot be attained by the subject directly. The external object as an independent existence lies outside of the subject and is exterior to it. The form or concept which is supposed to be conform to the

external reality is the object known in reality and, thus, the reality of the form or concept is at the presence of the subject.[46]

2. The nature of *al-ʻilm al-husûlî* is conceptual, i.e. the knowledge which is presented for the subject is through a concept or form; it can bee divided into conception (*tasawwur*) and assent (*tasdîq*). *Al-ʻilm al-hudûrî*, by contrast, does not involve any distinction of conception and assent, because it belongs to the order of being and reality itself.[47] It is based on the relation–obtained without a temporal extension–between the "present" object and the knowing subject.

So, it is a kind of knowledge by means of which the essence of things (i.e., things as they are) may be "obtained." This kind of illuminationist knowledge, to repeat, is validated by the experience of the "presence" (*hudûr*) of the object, i.e., it does not require a conception and then (later in time) an assent.

Unlike the Peripatetic school, who divided knowledge into *tasawwur* (conception) and *tasdîq* (assent)[48], for Suhrawardî, as well as Mullâ Sadrâ, this kind of division is true only for one sort of knowledge, i.e., *al-ʻilm al-husûlî*.[49]

3. It has been claimed that knowledge by mediation (*al-ʻilm al-husûlî*) requires separation of subject and object, whereas knowledge by presence necessitates the union of the subject and the object.[50]

The first part of this claim is true since, in any kind of *al-ʻilm al-husûlî*, there must be a mediation through which the

subject would be able to realize the object. The second part of this statement, however, is questionable. In self-knowledge, the union of the subject and object is plausible. But the knowledge by presence (*al-ʻilm al-hudûrî*) is not restricted to the self-knowledge.[51]

4. The process of thinking (*al-fikr)* occurs in *al-ʻilm al-husûlî* not in knowledge by presence, because the process of thinking (*al-fikr*) happens within the forms and mental concepts. Ibn Sînâ (d. 428/1037) gives us a definition of "thought" (*al-fikr*) as follows:

> I mean by "thought" here that by which a human being has, at the point of resolving, to move from things present in his mind-conceptions or assents- to things not present in it.[52]

This statement explicitly indicates that "thought" occurs, more or less, within the concepts and forms. On the other hand, the science of logic is there to preserve one from error in his thought.[53] But there is no room for logic in the process of "knowledge by presence."[54]

5. *Al-ʻilm al-husûlî* happens when the process of knowing occurs between the soul and an absent thing which are not united with each other. M.Ha`iri gives us an explanation of the term of "absence" here:

> The word "absence," quite often used in the linguistic technique of illuminative philosophy, means that there is no logical, ontological, or even epistemological connection between the two existences (namely

> subject and object) that are supposed to be in two completely different circumstances of being.[55]

Knowledge by presence (*al-ʻilm al-hudûrî*), by contrast, occurs when the object is at the presence of the subject. Since the material world is, as Mullâ Sadrâ argues, absent from itself, let alone from other things such as human soul,[56] the only knowledge of external world (i.e., material world), which is logically possible for the human soul to be obtained, is *al-ʻilm al-husûlî*. Therefore, knowledge by presence is restricted to immaterial existents.[57]

6. The dualism of truth and falsehood is a character of *al-ʻilm al-husûlî* whereas knowledge by presence is free from this dualism. M. Ha`irî argues that:

> This is because the essence of this pattern of knowledge (i.e. knowledge by presence) is not concerned with the notion of correspondence. When there is no external object, correspondence between an internal and external state, as well as between "external fact" and "statement," is not withstanding.[58]

To complete this argumentation, it might be said that the unification of the subject and object in "knowledge by presence" obviates the ground of the dualism of truth and falsehood. Here, in knowledge by presence, there is no sense of falsehood because the reality of the object is at the presence of the subject. Therefore, in the epistemological system of our sages, namely Suhrawardî and Mullâ Sadrâ, there is another sense of truth which is applicable to knowledge by presence.[59]

7. There are two kinds of object known in al-ʻilm al-husûlî: that which is known-by-itself (*al-maʻlûm bi al-dhât*; lit. known-by-essence) and that which is known-by-another (*al-maʻlûm bi al-ʻarad*; lit. Known-by-accident). The known-by-itself is the form apprehended by the knower itself. The known-by-accident is the external reality represented by the cognitive form; it is called the "accidentally known" (*al-maʻlûm bi al-ʻarad*) due to its association with the known-by-itself.[60] This kind of division, however, does not happen to al-ʻilm al-hudûrî, because, in this kind of knowledge, there is no separation and, therefore, dualism between the knower and the object known. The reality of the object exists at the presence of the subject.

Closing the chapter, it could be concluded that Mullâ Sadrâ traditionally accepts the division of knowledge into *al-ʻilm al-husûlî* and *al-ʻilm al-hudûrî.* But he finally, in the light of his ontological system and his own definition of knowledge, holds that every kind of knowledge is ultimately reduced to knowledge by presence.[61] This is, according to Mullâ Sadrâ, the only way through which one can obtain the reality as it is. Thus he states that:

> The knowledge of the reality of existence cannot be except through the illuminative presence and an intuition of the (immediate) determined (reality); then there will be no doubt about its inner-nature.[62]

[1]For instance, Sabzavârî mentions several divisions of knowledge such as: "Knowledge is either *husûlî* (empirical) or *hudûrî* (intuitive); and it is either *mufrad* (separative) or *murakkab* (collective); and it is either *fi'lî* (active) or *infi'âlî* (passive). *The Metaphysics of Sabzavari*, trans. and eds. M. Mohaghegh and T. Izutsu (New York: Caravan Books, 1977), pp. 212-13.

[2] *Asfâr*, I, 3, pp. 382-4, 500-507.

[3] Ibid., p. 382.

[4] In the following pages, I shall attempt to clarify the technical term *al-'ilm al-husûlî.*

[5] *Asfâr*, I/1, pp. 272-86, 309; *Risâla al-tasawwur wa al-tasdîq*, p. 307.

[6] H.A.Ghaffar Khan, "Shâh Walî Allâh: on the nature, origin, definition, and classification of knowledge," *Journal of Islamic Studies*, vol. 3, no. 2 (1992), Oxford, pp. 210-11.

[7] This term is also used in Suhrawardian epistemological language. Ziai alleges that the term *idrâk* as used by Suhrawardî is like a genus that covers a number of species, such as *'ilm*, *ma'rifa*, *hiss*, etc. *Knowledge and Illumination* (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1990), p. 141 (note no. 1).

[8] *Asfâr,* I/3, pp. 293,382-3. *Idrâk* has been divided into several divisions in recent Persian philosophy for which see: A. M. Mishkât al-Dînî, *Tahqîq dar Haqîqat-i 'ilm* (Tehran: Châpkhân-i Dânishgâh-i Tehran, 1965), pp. 2ff.

[9] Ibn Sînâ, *al-Ishârât wa al-Tanbîhât* (Tehran: Matba'a Heidarî, 1958), vol. 2, al-namat 3, pp. 343-7.

[10] Ibid., pp. 334-342.

[11] *Al-'ilm al-husûlî* can be translated as sensory, empirical, conceptual, formative, and a posteriori knowledge. It is called empirical or observational because observation and practical experience are its prerequisites. It is called formative because the form of the known object is the central point where the activity of the perception becomes knowledge. And it is called a posteriori because knowledge in this case comes after the experience and observation. S. J. Sajjadi, *Farhang-i*

'Ulûm-i 'Aqlî (Tehran: Kitâbkhâni Ibn Sînâ, 1962), p.173. It is also translated as knowledge by correspondence. M. Ha`iri, preferring this translation, remarks: "In almost all versions of Islamic philosophy, from Avicenna down to Sadr al-Dîn Shîrazî, the notion of "correspondence" is taken as the prime condition of this kind of knowledge." *The Principles of Epistemology in Islamic Philosophy* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992), p. 198. However, it seems to me that "correspondence" is merely one aspect of *al-'ilm al-husûlî* which does not accurately indicate the nature of that. Thus I think that, for some reasons I shall explain in the following pages, the English term "conceptual knowledge" is more precisely tantamount to the term "*al-'ilm al-husûlî*."

[12] More or less, we can find this definition in the following texts: Ibn Sînâ, *al-Ishârât*., vol. 2, p. 334; *al-Ta'lîqât* (Qum: Markaz-i al-Nashr, 1984), pp. 79,82; Bahmanyâr, *al-Tahsîl* (Tehran: Dânishgâh-i Tehran, 1961), pp. 493-8, 745; F. Râzî, *al-Mabâhith al-Mashriqîya*, vol. 1, pp. 439, 450; Suhrawardî, *Hikmat al-Ishrâq*, p. 15; Tûsî, *Sharh-i Mas`alat al-'Ilm*, pp. 26,28; Mullâ Sadrâ, *Risâla al-Tasawwur wa al-Tasdîq*, pp. 307-8; Sabzavârî, *Asrâr al-Hikam* (Tehran: Kitâbfurûshî-i Islâmîya, 1959), p. 61; S. J. Sajjadi, *Farhang-i 'Ulûm-i 'Aqlî* (Tehran: Kitâbkhâni Ibn Sînâ, 1962), p. 173.

[13] For more detail see: M. Ha`iri Yazdi, *The principles of Epistemology in Islamic Philosophy* (New York: SUNY Press, 1992), pp. 47-56.

[14] See above, n. 12.

[15] Mullâ Sadrâ, *Asfâr*, I/3, p. 382; *Mafâtîh al-Ghaib*, p. 109; *Risâla al-Tasawwur wa al-Tasdîq*, pp. 307-8

[16] Due to the above remarks it seems to me that the English term "conceptual or mediated knowledge" would preferably be an appropriate equivalent for the technical term "*al-'ilm al-husûlî*."

[17] In this regard M. Ha`irî states: "The relation of knowing or perceiving, however, with regard to the objective object (i.e., external object) is accidental (*bi-al-'arad*) and with regard to the subjective object (i.e., mental object), essential (*bi-al-dhât*). M.Ha`iri, *The principles of Epistemology in Islamic Philosophy* (New York: SUNY Press, 1992), p. 32. The parentheses and italics are mine.

[18] Suhrawardî, *Hikmat al-Ishrâq*, p. 15.

[19] Ibn Sînâ, *al-Ishârât*., vol. 2, *al-namat* 3, pp. 334-342.

[20] Ibid., p. 334 (trans. by A. Al-Oraibi in *Shî'î Renaissance*, Ph.D. thesis, McGill University, 1992).

[21] Suhrawardî, *Hikmat al-Ishrâq,* p. 15.

[22] Ibid., pp. 111-116.

[23] Mullâ Sadrâ, *Asfâr*, I/3, pp. 280-84, 298.

[24] The division of existence into mental existence (*al-wujûd al-dhihnî*) and external existence (*al-wujûd al-khârijî*) has been discussed in several philosophical and theological works so far. Mullâ Sadrâ earmarks one part of the first book of his *Asfâr* (about 64 pages) to the discussion of mental existence (*al-wujûd al-dhihnî*) and its ontological and epistemological characters. *Asfâr*, I/1, pp. 263-326.

[25] Ibid., pp. 297-99, *Mafâtîh al-Ghaib* (Tehran: Muassasa Mutâli'ât wa Tahqîqât-i Farhangî, 1984), p. 109; *al-'Arshîya*, p. 32.

[26] F. E. Peters, *Greek Philosophical Terms* (New York: New York University Press, 1967), p. 127.

[27] According to some of Sufis' idea, namely Shâh Walî Allâh's, the notion of *al-'ilm al-hudûrî* is slightly different from that of Suhrawardî. This understanding is that "it is a direct *fayd* (emanation) from *al-Rahmân*, not from the person who is receiving intuition or illumination. According to him, the Gnostic is in a passive state. It is *al-Rahmân* who induces intuitive knowledge in the heart of the mystic in an indescribable way." H. A. Ghaffar Khan, "Shâh Walî Allâh.," *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 3:2 (1992), p. 211.

[28] S. J. Sajjadi, op. cit. 170.

[29] Qutb al-Dîn Shîrâzî was one of the pupils of Nasîr al-Dîn Tûsî, and one of the famous astronomers and philosophers. In the field of Peripatetic philosophy, he left a remarkable work, written in Persian, entitled *Durrat al-Tâj*. He was one of the popular expositors of Suhrawardî's illuminationist philosophy. In his commentary on Suhrawardî's *Hikmat al-Ishrâq*, Qutb al-Dîn Shîrâzî explains and elucidates the whole idea of the illuminative system.

[30] Q. Shîrâzî, *Sharh Hikmat al-Ishrâq* 'Commentary on The Philosophy of Illumination' (Tehrân: Châp-i Sangî, 1913) pp. 38-39.

[31] H. Ziai, *Knowledge And Illumination* (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1990), p. 135.

[32] Suhrawardî, *Hikmat al-Ishrâq*, p. 15.

[33] Qutb al-Dîn Shîrâzî, *Sharh.*, p. 39.

[34] In this regard, Ziai, the author of *knowledge and Illumination*, asserts and explains the idea of Suhrawardî, as well as Shîrâzî- the commentator of *Hikmat al-Ishrâq*. Unfortunately, he doesn't clarify the main difference between the knowledge which is obtained through an 'idea' (*mithal*) and the knowledge which is obtained by presence. It is clear that, according to Suhrawardî, the technical terms such as 'presence' (*al-hudûr*), 'illuminationist relation' (*al-idâfa al-ishrâqîya*), and 'knowledge based on illumination and presence' (*al-'ilm al-ishrâqî al-hudûrî)* refer only to the latter. The commentator, Qutb al-Dîn Shîrâzî -in his *Sharh*, p. 39- explicitly elucidates the distinction between these two kinds of knowledge, with regard to the view point of Suhrawardî. On this point see: H. Ziai, *Knowledge and Illumination* (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1990), pp. 140-3.

[35] Q. Shîrâzî, *Sharh.*, p. 38.

[36] In *Hikmat al-Ishrâq*, pp. 97-103, Suhrawardî mentions several viewpoints and rejects all one by one. thereafter, he explains his own idea.

[37] Mullâ Sadrâ notably has a discussion about the issue, "*ittihâd al-'aql wa al-'âqil wa al-ma'qûl*". Having remarked and evaluated several notions, he finally demonstrates his theory of unification (*al-ittihâd*). In this regard see: *Asfâr*, I/3, pp. 312-44; F. Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullâ Sadrâ* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1976), p. 239.

[38] Mullâ Sadrâ, *Mafâtîh al-Ghaib* (Tehran: Muassasa Mutâli'ât wa Tahqîqât-i Farhangî, 1984), pp. 108-110.

[39] Mullâ Sadrâ, *Asfâr*, I/1, pp. 282-296, 308-309.

[40] Mullâ Sadrâ, *al-'Arshîya*, p. 32 (trans. by J. W. Morris in *The Wisdom of the Throne*, p. 159).

[41] The great contemporary Muslim philosopher, 'Allâma Sayyed Muhammad Husayn Tabâtabâ`î (1321-1402/1902-1983) is the author of some philosophical works such as *Nihâyat al-Hikmah*, and *Usûl Falsafa wa Ravish realism* (The principles of philosophy and the Method of

Realism) in which he defended realism in its traditional and medieval sense against all dialectic philosophies. For Tabâtabâ`î's view of the present issue see: *Nihâyah al-Hikmah* (Tehran: Intishârât-i al-Zahrâ, 1989), pp. 196-205.

[42] Tabâtabâ`î, *Nihâyah al-Hikmah,* p. 196.

[43] M.T.Mesbah Yazdî, *Ta'lîqa 'alâ Nihâyat al-Hikma* (Tehran: Intishârât-i al-Zahrâ, 1989), p. 196.

[44] For more details on this issue see: Mullâ Sadrâ, *Mafâtîh al-Ghaib*, p. 109, *al-Mabda` wa al-Ma'âd* (Tehran: Anjuman-i Shâhanshâhî Falsafi Iran, 1976), pp. 82-3.

[45] Mullâ Sadrâ, *Asfâr*, I/1, pp. 282-92 (with the notes of Sabzavârî and M.H. Tabâtabâ`î), *Asfâr*, I/3, p. 313.

[46] Having paraphrased two kinds of object, M. Hâ`irî attributes the character of double objectivity to the phenomenal knowledge (*al-'ilm al-husûlî*). *The Principles of Epistemology in Islamic Philosophy* (New York: SUNY Press, 1992), pp. 27-32.

[47] M. Ha`irî Yazdî, *The Principles*., pp. 46-7, *Agâhî wa Gavâhî* (Tehran: Anjuman-i Islâmî Hikmat wa Falsafi Iran, 1981), p. 6 (n. 1).

[48] Ibn Sînâ, *al-Najât, al-mantiq* (Beirut: Dâr al-Jîl, 1992), ch. 2; Bahmanyâr, *al-Tahsîl* (Tehran: Dânishgâh-i Tehran, 1961), p. 4.

[49] Qutb al-Dîn Shîrâzî, *Sharh-i Hikmat al-Ishrâq*, pp. 38-39.

[50] M. Ha`iri, *The Principles*., pp. 43-4; M. Aminrazavi, *Suhrawardî's Theory of knowledge*, p. 188.

[51] Several kinds of knowledge by presence (*al-'ilm al-hudûrî*) will be examined in the following part.

[52] Ibn Sînâ, *al-Ishârât wa al-Tanbîhât*, vol. 1, p. 10. (Trans. by S.C.Inati).

[53] Logic, spoken of as a tool or as a science, is a set of rules that helps one distinguish the valid from the invalid explanatory phrase and proof. Ibid., pp. 9,117,127.

[54] H. Malikshâhî, *Tarjuma va Tafsîr Tahdhîb al-Mantiq Taftâzânî,* p. 23.

[55] M. Ha`irî, *The Principles*., p. 47. The parentheses are mine.

[56] Mullâ Sadrâ, *al-'Arshîya*, p. 225. Mullâ Sadrâ here argues that any material thing is absent from itself by itself.

[57] The discussion and the arguments of the nature of knowledge by presence, as well as of its restriction to the immaterial things will be pointed out in the following chapter.

[58] M. Ha`irî Yazdî, *The Principles*., p. 45. The parentheses are mine.

[59] In the very beginning of his *Hikmat al-Ishrâq* (p. 10), Suhrawardî asserts that there is no doubt in this kind of illuminative understanding. Mullâ Sadrâ also confirms the same statement in his work *Al-Mashâ'ir*, p. 30.

[60] Mullâ Sadrâ, *Mafâtîh al-Ghaib*, p. 109; Tabâtabâ`î, *Bidâyat al-Hikmah* (Beirut: Dâr al-Mustafâ, 1982), p. 164.

[61] Mullâ Sadrâ, *Mafâtîh al-Ghaib*, pp. 108-110.

[62] Mullâ Sadrâ, *al-Mashâ'ir*, p. 30 (trans. by P.Morewedge in the same page).

CHAPTER 3

Immateriality and "knowledge by presence"

I. *Tajarrud* (Immateriality) [1]

The technical term "immaterial" (*mujarrad*) is traditionally used in contrast with the term "material" (*mâddî*).[2] In physics, "material being" (*al-mawjûd al-mâddî*) is an entity being susceptible of division into quantities and location in space. Being in space and time, having susceptibility of motion and change are general characters of physical matter.[3] The existence of this kind of being is, in the language of Mullâ Sadrâ, associated with matter (*al-mâdda*) and position (*al-wad'*) and is spatio temporal.

> One (form) is the material form the existence of which is associated with matter and position and is spatio temporal.[4]

Mullâ Sadrâ, dividing the being of the world into "material" (*mâddî*) and "immaterial" (*mujarrad*) existents, elaborates several levels for the immaterial world. Some immaterial beings are completely separated from the matter and its attributes such as time and space, whereas some other

immaterial beings are separated from some material aspects. A good example for the former, according to Mullâ Sadrâ, is an "actual intelligible" and for the latter is an "actual imaginable". He states:

> ... and the other is a form which is free and separate from matter, from position, and from space and location. The separation is either complete, in which case it is an actual intelligible form, or incomplete in which case it is an actual imaginable or an actual sensible form.[5]

This kind of classification has a background in the philosophy of Ibn Sînâ (d. 428/1032).[6] Ibn Sînâ classified the substances into three major categories:

1. The substance whose being is one, which possesses contingency (*mumkin*) and is completely separate (*mujarrad*) from all matter and potentiality is called Intellect (*'aql*).

2. The substance whose being is one but accepts the form of other beings is divided into two categories:

> **a.** That which does not accept divisibility and, although separate from matter, has need of a body in its action is called Soul (*nafs*).
>
> **b.** That which accepts divisibility, and has the three divisions of length, width and depth is called Body (*jism*).[7]

The same classification has been, more or less, considered by the Muslim thinkers after Ibn Sînâ, but in a diverse route and, in some cases, by a different language. Under their classification, the doctrine of "world of Images" (*'Alam al-Mithâl*) has been propounded as an independent

realm. It was developed after al-Ghazâlî (505/1111) by Suhrawardî (587/1191), Ibn 'Arabî (638/1240), and others. According to this doctrine, the ontological structure of reality comprises three worlds–that of pure ideas or intellectual entities on top, of pure images or figures in the middle, and of material bodies at the lowest rung.[8]

Suhrawardî[9] propounds his own classification but in a different language. Employing his illuminative terminology, Suhrawardî has divided the world into several categories. First, he divided it into what is "light in the very reality of itself" and what is not "light in the very reality of itself," which falls into the category of darkness. Then, he divided the "light" into a mode of light that is genuine, unadulterated, and noninherent in anything else, and another mode of light that is accidental and subsists in something else. Darkness is also divided into a mode of darkness that does not occur in another thing and therefore is pure and independent, and a mode which does occur in something else and is not independent. The former is called in his illuminative language the "obscure substance" (*al-jawhar al-ghâsiq*). Examples of the latter are all material objects. These material objects are essentially counted among the modes of darkness, and they are called "intermediate objects" (*al-barzakh*).[10] Consequently, what is called "light" (*nûr*) in his system is free from matter, and, on the contrary, what is called "dark" (*zulma*) or "intermediate object" (*al-barzakh*) is material (*mâddî* or *jism*).

Following the traditional classification, Mullâ Sadrâ has also ontologically demonstrated three different realms: the

spiritual, the imaginative, and the material. The imaginative world[11] of images or symbols connects the spiritual to the material world. These three realms represent the continuity of existence constantly sustained by the Source of everything, God.[12]

Thus, existence is divisible, from the aspect of freedom from matter and its absence, into three realms. One of them is the world of matter and potentiality. The second is that in which matter is absent, though not some of its properties such as shape, quantity, position, etc. It is called the "world of Images' *('âlam al-mithâl*) and the "intermediate world" (*'âlam al-barzakh*), which lies between the world of the intellect (*'âlam al-'aql*) and the material realm. Therefore, Mullâ Sadrâ uses the word *al-barzakh* in a different sense than Suhrawardî. The third is the world of non-materiality (*'âlam al-tajarrud*), totally free from the effects of matter. It is called the world of intellect (*'âlam al-'aql*).[13]

In sum, it is plausible to conclude here that, according to Mullâ Sadrâ, the technical term, "*mâddî*," is used for an entity which has actually the three divisions of length, width and depth. This entity, which is also associated with position, space, time and location, is called, in his terminology, "*jism*" or "*jismânî*" (body).[14] The technical term "*mujarrad*," by contrast, is applied for an entity which is free from, at least, one aspect of "*mâdda*". This application comprises a variety of entities and levels–beginning from the lowest rung of "*tajarrud*," such as an actual sensible form perceived by sensory organs, to the

highest level of "*tajarrud*," such an entity being totally free from matter, position, space, time and location.[15]

II. *Tajarrud al-'ilm* (Immateriality of knowledge)

In the theory of knowledge, there are three basic items which have to be considered as the elements of the process of knowing–the subject knowing *(al-'âlim*), the object known (*al-ma'lûm*), and knowledge (*al-'ilm*). In the tradition of Islamic philosophy, the issue has received considerable attention. One who scans through the pages of the history of Islamic philosophy will surely come across the fact that Muslim thinkers have ontologically examined the three-fold process of knowledge, regarding the problem of materiality and immateriality.[16] Our sages, namely Suhrawardî and Mullâ Sadrâ, have also given much consideration to the problem of materiality and immateriality of knowledge (*al-'ilm*), knower (*al-'âlim*) and known (*al-ma'lûm*) in different places of their works. Their argument and discussion will be analyzed, in greater detail, in the coming pages (under the title of *ibsâr* "vision"). But first, we shall examine briefly the problem of "immateriality" of "knowledge" and "knower."

a: Immateriality of "knowledge"

Both Suhrawardî and Mullâ Sadrâ maintain that "knowledge" (*al-'ilm*) is "free from matter" (*mujarrad*). Their

notion is understood from their definition of knowledge (as we have seen in chapter one).

In Suhrawardî's epistemological system, the terms "presence" (*hudûr*) and "manifest" (*zuhûr*) are more or less synonymously employed in the definition of knowledge.[17] Elsewhere, he asserts that "hudûr" or "zuhûr" is applied only to "light" (*nûr*) which is free from matter. He adds that although the "material substances" are, in his words, darkness [which is called "intermediate objects" (*al-barzakh*)], they are rather in such a state that should rays of light be cast upon them by which they can come to light, they thereby become apparent; but should these rays not reach them, they fall back to absolute darkness and disappear.[18]

It might be concluded here that according to Suhrawardî, the nature of knowledge, which is described as "light" by him, is absolutely free from matter.

Mullâ Sadrâ, confirming the Suhrawardian concept of *hudûr* and *zuhûr*, prefers to define knowledge by his own terminology, which is derived from his ontological attention on the concept of "existence" (*wujûd*). He defines knowledge as "a pure existence, free from matter (*al-wujûd al-mujarrad min al-mâdda*)"[19] Thereafter, he argues that "knowledge" is not body and body also cannot become knowledge.

> Body itself cannot become knowledge, since it is not pure being: parts of a body, being mutually exclusive, are never present to each other and hence body can never attain a real unity which is requisite for true being and knowledge.[20]

As we can see here, Mullâ Sadrâ, demonstrating the immateriality of "knowledge," has employed the Ishrâqî term, namely the term of "presence" (*hudûr*) and its antonym "absence" (*ghaiba*).

Therefore, one of the main arguments for the immateriality of "knowledge" and "knower" is based on the principle of "presence" (*hudûr*), which has been employed in Ishrâqî definition of knowledge and also accepted by Mullâ Sadrâ. According to this argument, knowledge is "presence" (*hudûr*) and the presence of anything requires it to be something which is in act (*bi-l-fi'l*), free from any association with matter and potentiality (*al-quwwa*).

Further, the presence of knowledge requires that the knower acquiring its knowledge be also in act (*bi-l-fi'l*), in total actuality, non-deficient in any respect arising from association with matter.

Hence, the knower is also non-material and free from potentiality. From this, it becomes clear that knowledge, as we have seen in chapter one, is "presence" of a non-material existent for a non-material existent.[21]

Mullâ Sadrâ, however, argues that some kind of knowledge is absolutely separated from matter, such as intellection, and some kind of knowledge is separated from some aspect of matter, such as sensation and imagination. Nevertheless, the nature of perception, he adds, is absolutely based on at least a kind of immateriality.[22]

b: Immateriality of "knower"

On the immateriality of the human soul (as a knower), there is an accepted theory among the Muslim philosophers, namely Fârâbî, Ibn Sînâ, Tûsî, Suhrawardî and Mullâ Sadrâ. By different methods and distinct backgrounds, they have demonstrated the immateriality of the human soul, confirming the fact that "*nafs*" (the human soul) is ultimately capable of existing independently of the body.[23] In order to prove that "self" (*al-nafs*) is an immaterial spiritual substance, Ibn Sînâ has recourse to his famous argument that a person, under certain suppositions, can affirm his own "self" (*dhâtihî*) without affirming the existence of his body.[24]

In a number of his works,[25] Suhrawardî holds that the human soul "self" (*nafs*) is separated from the body since, he argues, the body is in a continuous state of change. But, it is not possible for humans to undergo so much change and yet remain the same. There must be an immaterial substance, mind or self (*nafs*), separate from body. The nature of this substance or entity cannot be material since all material things undergo change and therefore cannot remain the same. Consequently, this "self" (*nafs*) has to be immaterial. In this regard Suhrawardî states:

> All the parts of the body change and if your "self" consisted of these parts of the body, they would also be in a continuous state of change. (Thus) your self yesterday would not be the same "self" as today, but each day your self would be other than itself and this obviously is not the case. And since your knowledge is

> continuous and permanent it is not at all body nor part of the body, but it is beyond all this.[26]

As this statement shows, Suhrawardî holds that knowledge, like "self", is immaterial and he elsewhere argues for that by the same argumentation. Suhrawardî also in several places of his works asserts different argumentations for the immateriality of the "human soul."[27] In this connection, he relies on a famous argument that the human soul is incorporeal since it becomes conscious of itself. He says:

> It was proven that every being who becomes conscious of his essence is an incorporeal light, and its opposite, meaning everything that is light is also conscious of its own nature, is also true.[28]

In Mullâ Sadrâ's system of philosophical psychology, there are several levels for the human soul, from the beginning of its generation to the end of its goal. The soul is, in some level, pure material (*jismânî*) and in some level pure immaterial (*'aqlânî*), and, between these two levels, there are different levels for the soul, regarding the weakness and strength of the materiality and immateriality.[29]

In his major work, *Asfâr*, Mullâ Sadrâ has devoted a whole section to the discussion of the immateriality of "human soul."[30] Analyzing and criticizing several points of view, Mullâ Sadrâ has given more than twelve rational, mystical, and traditional demonstrations for the immateriality of "human soul." After every argument, he evaluates it and replies to the objections which had been raised by others. Finally, he holds

that the soul is bodily in its origin but spiritual in its survival (*jismânîyat al-hudûth, rûhânîyat al-baqâ`*).[31]

Yet Mullâ Sadrâ maintains that the human soul is free from matter and hence capable of existence independently of the body. The reason for this doctrine, in part, is to prove that simple human souls which possess hardly any intellective activity, but simply work with imagination also survive. For, Mullâ Sadrâ absolutely holds that a being endowed with imagination is independent of natural matter even though it is not independent of a certain kind of extension and quantity (*miqdâr*) which, however, is not material. This view, in turn, rests on his doctrine of the *'Alam al-Mithâl* (World of Images), according to which, an image, although not spiritual, is not material either, is not directly subject to substantive change as the world of physical forms and, therefore, exists by itself independent of matter.[32]

Further, to prove that the human soul is separate from the body, Mullâ Sadrâ applies the philosophers' argument[33] from self-knowledge. The human's self-knowledge is direct, continuous, and independent of its knowledge of the external object. Hence the human soul is independent of the material body. Again, he argues that the immateriality of "knowledge" also postulates the immateriality of the soul. Apprehension of knowledge means the reception of the known by the knower, and the apprehension of a thing and its presence is nothing except its existence, that existence itself. The immediacy of the known requires that the knower acquiring its knowledge be in act, non-deficient in any respect arising from association with

matter. Hence, the knower (*al-nafs al-insânî*) is non-material and free from potentiality (*al-quwwa*).[34]

According to our sages' argumentation so far it becomes clear, firstly, that the knowledge must necessarily be something non-material.

Secondly, the knower, through whom knowledge subsists, must also necessarily be non-material. But the known, to which knowledge pertains, in Mullâ Sadrâ's point of view, must be non-material whereas Suhrawardî doesn't necessitate the immateriality for the known. Their notion and philosophical arguments will be discussed in the following pages.

III. *Ibsâr* (vision)

The problem of vision (*ibsâr*) has been considered in different ways by Suhrawardî and Mullâ Sadrâ. Suhrawardî formulates a theory of vision on the basis of direct "relation" (*al-idâfah*) between the soul and the external world whereas Mullâ Sadrâ thoroughly rejects this illuminative notion. However, both have refuted the traditional views of vision, namely "*intibâ'"* (the imprinting of a form from the object in the eye) or "*khurûj al-shu'â'"* (the exit of a ray from the eye). Against these two theories, we can find the same objections in our sages' works. They maintain that vision (*ibsâr*) does not consist of the imprint of the form of the object in the eye, nor of something that goes out from the eye. Therefore, the act of

seeing, according to them, is a kind of knowledge by presence but in a different manner.[35]

Refuting the other existing theories of how vision occurs, Suhrawardî offers his own view which can be explained within the principles of illumination. He states:

> once you know that vision is not caused by the impression of phantasms from the visible object on the eye, nor does it occur through the emission of visual rays from the eye. Then except for the encounter of the lit object with the healthy eye, it is not in anything else... and the result of this encounter in regards to sight is due to the absence of the veil between that which sees and the seen.[36]

The act of vision, according to Suhrawardî, is applicable whenever the subject (the sound eye) and the object (the luminous thing) are both present. In this case, an "illuminationist relation" (*al-idâfa al-ishrâqîya*) is established between the subject and the object. There are a number of conditions necessary for the act of vision.

These conditions, as Zia`i summarizes, are:

" 1. The presence of light is due to the propagation of light from the source of light, i.e., the Light of Lights.[37]

2. The absence of any obstacle or veil (*hijâb*) between the subject and the object.[38]

3. The illumination of the object as well as the subject."[39] Consequently, Suhrawardî, on the basis of the

knowledge by presence, formulates his theory of vision (*ibsâr*) which is in accordance with his illuminationist doctrine.[40]

Mullâ Sadrâ, rejecting the two traditional theories of vision, criticizes Suhrawardî's theory as well. He holds that any kind of material body (*al-jism al-mâddî*) cannot be a direct object for perception.[41] The argument that Mullâ Sadrâ gives us, in his objection against Suhrawardî, is based on his ontological notion of a material existent, i.e., a material being is veiled from itself by itself. He adds:

> It has been proven that this mode of shadowy and material being is veiled from itself by itself. So with regard to this (material) mode (of being), the presence (of a material thing) is precisely the same as its absence from itself; its coherence is the same as its separability; its unity is the same as its potential multiplicity; and its conjunction is the same as its divisibility.[42]

On the basis of this ontological principle, Mullâ Sadrâ demonstrates his argument of the process of vision. Mullâ Sadrâ states another objection against Suhrawardî, considering the term of "illuminative relation" (*idâfa ishrâqîya*). Suhrawardî maintains that this kind of relation occurs through the soul's direct witnessing of a form external to the eye and subsisting in matter. Mullâ Sadrâ claims that this kind of relation between the soul and the material world could not be as an "illuminative relation."

> This connection (which they posited between the act of vision and an externally subsisting material form) cannot be, since the relation between what has no position (that is, the soul's act of vision) and something

> having material dimensions (that is, the "object" of vision, in their theory) is impossible except by means of something having position.
>
> So that even if one should suppose the validity (of their theory of vision) through an intermediary (between the soul and the material object of vision), the relation would not be one of illuminative knowledge, but rather a material and spatial one, since all the activities of material powers and everything which they undergo must be in a spatial location.[43]

Mullâ Sadrâ then proceeds to state his own view of vision:

> The truth about vision–as God has shown us by inspiration–is that after the fulfillment of certain specific conditions, with God's permission, there arise from the soul forms suspended (from their notice archetypes), subsisting through the soul, present in the soul, and appearing in the world of the soul–not in this (material) world.[44]

Mullâ Sadrâ's argument can be summarized as follows: The material being cannot be a direct object for perception since it is absent from itself, let alone from the other thing. The external world and the absence of a veil between that and the knower (i.e., the soul) are some necessary conditions for the act of seeing. Since there has to be a causal relationship between the observer and what is seen, the soul is, by the help of God, the creator of the immaterial form.

The visible form, which is directly perceived by the soul, is an immaterial being, representing the external world. Therefore,

in seeing something, it is not the case that the subject sees the external object but that it is the presence of the inner object to be seen that allows for the very act of seeing to take place.[45]

According to Mullâ Sadrâ, the act of seeing (or any kind of sensitive perception) takes place when an interaction happens between the soul (as a knower) and the external world (as a known). The external world, on the one hand, prepares some necessary conditions of the act of seeing, and the soul, on the other hand, makes an immaterial form corresponding to the external object.

Consequently, the existence of the form (in any sort of perception), being at the presence of the soul, is directly perceived by the soul.[46] Mullâ Sadrâ contends that this relation between the soul and the immaterial form is due to be called "illuminative relation" (*al-idâfah al-ishrâqîyah*).[47]

What seems plausible, on the ground of our discussion, to be concluded here is that Mullâ Sadrâ reached much the same epistemological conclusion as Suhrawardî, although by a very different route. Having recourse to their illuminative principles, both Suhrawardî and Mullâ Sadrâ have been ultimately led to the inference that, in the act of vision, the only way through which the external thing could be known is knowledge by presence.

The process of "knowledge by presence," according to Suhrawardî, happens directly between the soul (*nafs*) and the external object. But, according to Mullâ Sadrâ, since the process of "knowledge by presence" cannot be applicable directly between knower and any material object, as we have

seen above, the soul, in this case, knows by presence the immaterial form which is representative of the external object.

> The being of those (material) things is not in sensation, and they are grasped by sense or by the intellect only in an accidental manner and in consequence of a form in sensation corresponding to them.[48]

As we have seen so far, the difference between Suhrawardî's notion of vision and Sadrâ's is obvious, although there are many similarities between their epistemological systems. Therefore, it is plausible to claim that the most important distinction between Suhrawardian epistemology and Sadrian theory of knowledge concerns the problem of vision "*ibsâr*."

Mullâ Sadrâ's theory of vision, however, has been criticized by his well-known follower, Mullâ Hâdî Sabzavârî. Confirming Suhrawardî's theory of vision, Sabzavârî, in his Glosses on *Asfâr*, replies to the objections Mullâ Sadrâ has propounded against Suhrawardî. He remarks that there are several ranks for the soul in some of which the soul can directly observe the existence of the external world. In this case, the relation between the soul and the external object is by unity (*bi-l-ittihâd*).[49]

Some contemporary thinkers such as Mesbâh Yazdî also criticize the Sadrian notion of vision. Mesbâh Yazdî asserts that one may accept the fact that a material thing is absent from itself to the extent that every part of its being is separated from the others, but it doesn't necessitate its absence from its efficient cause.

It could be considered that as the cause gives the existence to everything, and therefore there is an ontological relation between them, in the same vein, everything is at the presence of its cause. Thus there is logically an epistemological relation between the efficient cause and things.[50]

Concerning Suhrawardî's account of vision and Sabzavârî's support, one might say that this kind of relation, namely "illuminative relation," is acceptable if there were a causal-relation between two things. If Suhrawardî accepts this kind of relation between "human soul" and the external world[51], it would be plausible for him to confirm an intuitive relation between them, as Sabzavârî does. But here an obvious objection arises against Mullâ Sadrâ who thoroughly denies the material world to be the direct object for any kind of knower.

If Mullâ Sadrâ contends the causal relation between the external world and its creator (i.e., the Necessary Existent), why does he discard any epistemological relation between them! The Sadrian argumentation and the objections will be discussed in chapter five.

What we may conclude so far, considering the results of our sages' arguments, is that, in the process of vision, the function "knowledge by presence" is the unique way through which the soul can be aware of the external world. In this connection, the difference between their epistemological system is that, for Suhrawardî, a material being can be a direct object for "knowledge by presence," whereas, for Mullâ Sadrâ,

by contrast, the direct object for knowledge (any sort of knowledge) should be an immaterial thing.

Consequently, the material world is "known by essence" (*al-ma'lûm bi-dhât*) in Suhrawardî's system, and "known by accident" (*al-ma'lûm bi-l-'arad*) in the Sadrian system.

[1] "separation from matter," "noncorporeality" or "immateriality" are the usual translations of "*tajarrud*."

[2] *mâdda*, translated here as "matter," often refers simply to the elements of corporeal being, and in those cases is close in meaning to *jism*, "body." According to the definition of "*jism*" that Mullâ Sadrâ gives us here the term "*jism* or *jismânî*" is preferably, in contrast with "*mujarrad*," applied in place of "*mâdda* or *mâddî*." *Asfâr*, I/2, p. 94.

[3] J. Sajjâdî, *Farhang-i 'Ulûm-i 'Aqlî* (Tehran: Kitâbkhâni Ibn Sînâ, 1962), p. 192.

[4] Mullâ Sadrâ, *Asfâr*, I/3, p. 313 (trans. by M.Hâ`irî as stated in *The Principle of Epistemology in Islamic Philosophy*, p. 35).

[5] Ibid., p. 313.

[6] Ibn Sînâ, known to the West as Avicenna, lived from 980-1037 A.D. For further information on his life see: William E. Gohlman, *The life of Ibn Sînâ* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1974).

[7] Ibn Sînâ, *Dânishnâmah 'Alâ`î, Ilâhîyât*, p. 36 (trans. by S. H. Nasr in *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*, p. 200). See also F.

Rahman, *Avicenna's Psychology*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), pp. 38-40.

[8] For a full discussion of the history of the doctrine of the "world of Images" (*'Alam al-Mithâl*) prior to and including Mullâ Sadrâ see: F. Rahman, " Dream, Imagination, and 'Alam al-Mithâl," *Islamic Studies*, no. 3 (1964), pp. 167-80.

[9] Fazlur Rahman believes that after Ibn Sînâ, concerning the theory of "World of Images" (*'âlam al-mithâl*), a new development explicitly starts with Suhrawardî. For more information see: F. Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullâ Sadrâ,* p. 201.

[10] Suhrawardî, *Opera II, Hikmat al-Ishrâq*, pp. 107-8.

[11] The intermediate imaginative world must not be confused with the faculty of imagination.

[12] Mullâ Sadrâ, *al-Mashâ'ir* (New York: SSIPS, 1992), p. 63.

[13] Mullâ Sadrâ, *Asfâr*, I/3, pp. 501-507; F. Rahman, *The philosophy of Mullâ Sadrâ,* pp. 200-201; M.H.Tabâtabâ`î, *Bidâyat al-Hikma* (Beirut: Dâr al-Mustafâ, 1982), p. 151.

[14] In several places of his works, Mullâ Sadrâ employs the term "*jism*" for a material entity versus the immaterial thing. *Asfâr*, I/3, pp. 297-9, *al-Mashâ'ir*, p. 81, *al-Mabda` wa al-Ma'âd*, pp. 18-21, *'Arshîya*, p. 225.

[15] For more details on the problem of materiality and immateriality, see M. T. Mesbah Yazdi, *Amûzish Falsafa*, vol. 2, p. 124; S. M. R. Hejazi, " Material and Immaterial Existent," *Ma'rifat*, no. 1 (winter 1992), pp. 18-26.

[16] Ibn Sînâ in several places of his works has examined the issue in a vast dimension. *al-Najât*, pp. 99-105, *al-Ta'lîqât*, pp. 77-81, *Dânishnâmah 'Alâ`î, Ilâhîyât*, p. 36. For Fârâbî's idea, see *Risâlat fî Ithbât al-mufâriqât*, p. 7.

[17] Suhrawardî, *Opera* II, *Hikmat al-Ishrâq*, p.113; see also chapter 1, pp. 21-23.

[18] Suhrawardî, *Opera* II, *Hikmat al-Ishrâq*, pp. 108-110.

[19] *Asfâr*, I/3, pp. 292, 294, 297; *Asfâr*, I/1, p. 290.

[20] Ibid., pp. 297-8 (trans. by F. Rahman in *The Philosophy of Mullâ Sadrâ*, p. 213).

[21] M. H. Tabâtabâ`î, *Bidâyat al-Hikma* (Beirut: Dâr al-Mustafâ, 1982), pp. 148-9.

[22] Mullâ Sadrâ, *al-Mabda` wa al-Ma'âd*, p. 79.

[23] For Fârâbî's point of view see: *al-Rasâ`il*, *Risâlat fî Ithbât al-Mufâriqât*, pp. 3,5,7; *al-Ta'lîqât*, pp. 10,12-13; *al-Madîna al-Fâdila*, p. 53; for Ibn Sînâ's theory see: *al-Shifâ`*, al-Nafs, chapter 6, *al-Ishârât*, vol. 2, pp. 319-24, 334-42; for Tûsî's doctrine see: his notes on Ibn Sînâ's *al-Ishârât*., vol. 2, pp. 319-24, 334-42. In this connection, for more details see: F. Rahman, *Avicenna's Psychology*, pp. 50-53; *Prophecy in Islam* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1958), Chapter I, Section 1,2.

[24] Ibn Sînâ, *al-Ishârât*., vol. 2, *al-namat* 3, pp. 319-323; *al-Najât*, pp. 174-8. See also Davidson, *Alfarabi*, *Avicenna, and Averroes, on Intellect* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 106.

[25] Suhrawardî, *Opera* I*, al-Talvîhât*, pp. 68-74,79-81, *al-Mashâri',* pp. 496-7; *Partaw Nâmah,* chapter 4, pp. 23-24.

[26] Suhrawardî, *Partaw Nâmah*, chapter 4, pp. 23-24 (trans. by M. Aminrazavi, in *Suhrawardî's Theory of Knowledge*, p. 127). For another argumentation of Suhrawardî, see p. 76 in the following chapter.

[27] *Opera* I, *al-Talvîhât*, pp. 68-74,79-81, *al-Mashâri',* pp. 496-7.

[28] Suhrawardî, *Opera* II, *Hikmat al-Ishrâq*, pp. 116.

[29] Mullâ Sadrâ, *Asfâr*, IV/1, pp. 325-27, *'Arshîya*, p. 19.

[30] *Asfâr*, IV/1, pp. 260-322.

[31] Ibid., p. 347.

[32] Mullâ Sadrâ, *Asfâr,* IV/1, pp. 42-44, 278, 294-6.

[33] For Fârâbî's demonstrations that the human soul is immaterial see: *Risâlat fî Ithbât al-Mufâriqât*, p. 7; and for Ibn Sînâ's argumentation see: *al-Shifâ`,* al-Nafs, pp. 187-96; *al-Najât,* pp. 210-20; see also F. Rahman, *Avicenna's Psychology* (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), pp. 41-54.

[34] Mullâ Sadrâ, *Asfâr,* IV/1, pp. 43, 294-6.

[35] For Suhrawardî's view see: *Opera* II, *Hikmat al-Ishrâq*, p. 134; for Sadrian theory see: *Asfâr*, IV/1, pp. 178-183.

[36] *Opera* II, *Hikmat al-Ishrâq*, p. 134.

[37] Suhrawardî, *Opera* II, *Hikmat al-Ishrâq*, pp. 150, 152-153.

[38] Ibid., pp. 134-5, 213-216.

[39] H. Zia`i, *Knowledge and Illumination* (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1990), p. 161.

[40] For a more complete discussion on this problem see: M. Aminrazavi, *Suhrawardî's Theory of Knowledge* (Ph. D. Thesis, Temple University, 1989), pp. 234-237.

[41] Mullâ Sadrâ, *Asfâr*, IV/1, p. 182.

[42] Mullâ Sadrâ, *al-'Arshîyah*, p. 225 (Trans. J.W. Morris in *The Wisdom of the Throne*, pp. 107-108).

[43] Ibid., p. 237 (Trans. J.W. Morris in *The Wisdom of the Throne*, p. 136).

[44] Ibid., p. 237 (Trans. J.W. Morris in *The Wisdom of the Throne*, pp. 136-137).

[45] M. H. Tabâtabâ`î, n. 1, *Asfâr,* I/1, p. 286.

[46] Mullâ Sadrâ, *Ta'lîqa 'alâ Sharh-i Hikmat al-Ishrâq*, p. 454.

[47] Mullâ Sadrâ, *Asfâr*, IV/1, p. 182, *al-'Arshîyah*, p. 21.

[48] Mullâ Sadrâ, *al-'Arshîya*, p. 227 (Trans. J. W. Morris in *The Wisdom of the Throne*, p. 114).

[49] Sabzavârî, n. 1, *Asfâr*, IV/1, pp. 179-81 (n. 1). See also his notes on Mullâ Sadrâ's *Asfâr,* III/1, pp.164-166 (n. 3).

[50] M. Mesbâh Yazdî, *Ta'lîqa*., pp. 205, 256-7. This issue and the Sadrian theory of vision (concerning the problem of God's knowledge) will be discussed in chapter 5.

[51] It seems that Suhrawardî, in his *Hikmat al-Ishrâq*, maintains this kind of relationship between a special kind of human being and the external world. For more details see: *Opera II*, *Hikmat al-Ishrâq,* pp. 213-215.

PART TWO

Knowledge by Presence

(*al-'ilm al-hudûrî*)

Introduction

So far we have seen the definition and clarification, as well as the characters of "knowledge by presence" (*al-ʿilm al-hudûrî*) in the sense found in the epistemological system of our sages Suhrawardî and Mullâ Sadrâ. In this part, the primary aim is to clarify certain kinds of "knowledge by presence" which have been, or might be, examined in their system.

It seems generally accepted by Muslim philosophers that non-material substances are in-themselves present-for-themselves by virtue of their completeness and actuality.[1] But is immediate knowledge confined to a thing's knowledge of itself, or, when both subject and object are non-material, does it include a cause's knowledge of its effect, and vice versa?

It seems that the Peripatetics hold the former position and the Illuminationists subscribe to the latter view. The epistemological consideration of this question, in its turn, raised serious debates among them, especially with regard to the problem of God's knowledge of His effects.

It should be noted that most philosophers who have in any way addressed the problem of "knowledge by presence" (*al-ʿilm al-hudûrî*) consider "self-knowledge" (*al-ʿilm bi al-dhât*)

as a case of that, holding that, in this case, the object of knowledge should exist at the presence of the subject.[2] But, with respect to other kinds of knowledge by presence, there is, as we shall see, no general agreement among them.

To be sure, it is generally held that the Peripatetics have restricted “knowledge by presence” to “self-knowledge” (*al-ʻilm bi al-dhât*). Sabzavârî, for example, asserting that "intuitive knowledge" is not confined to "self-knowledge", rejects the view attributed to the Peripatetics, namely, confinement of *al-ʻilm al-hudûrî* (intuitive knowledge or knowledge by presence) to "self-knowledge," and *al-ʻilm al-husûlî* (empirical knowledge) to "knowledge of anything other than "self".[3]

Nevertheless, this attribution could be questioned because Ibn Sînâ himself, in some places of his works, states that the only way for the human soul, which is essentially immaterial, to know the immaterial entities (such as universals “*kullîyât*” and intelligible concepts “‘*aqlîyât*”) is a direct perception, i.e., without any formal or conceptual mediator, or employing a bodily organ.[4] Therefore, according to Ibn Sînâ, there is a kind of knowledge by presence other than self-knowledge.

Both Suhrawardî and Mullâ Sadrâ, as well as their followers such as Sabzavârî and Tabâtabâ`î, however, maintain other kinds of knowledge by presence. Generally speaking, they hold that when, on the one hand, two existents are immaterial and there is, on the other hand, an ontological relationship between them–such as causal relationship–thus

they know each other by presence, for there is no barrier between them. In the case of an immaterial cause and its effect, for instance, the effect is present with all its being for the cause, without there being any barrier between them. It is known with immediacy to the cause through its existence itself. Similarly, when the cause and the effect are non-material, the cause is present with its existence for its effect, which is sustained by it, and there is no barrier separating them. Hence the cause is known to its effect with an immediate knowledge.[5]

Suhrawardî, at one time, went even further. He held that, in the case of vision (*ibsâr*) as we examined in the preceding chapter, the act of vision is applicable whenever the subject (the sound eye) and the object (the luminous thing) are both present without there being an obstacle. In this case, an "illuminationist relation" (*al-idâfa al-ishrâqîya*) is established between the subject and the object.[6]

Therefore, according to Suhrawardî and contrary to Mullâ Sadrâ, the scope of the process of "knowledge by presence" is wider, including the epistemological relationship between the material world which is illuminated, and the subject (knower).

Mullâ Sadrâ, in several places of his works, insists on the fact that "*al-'ilm al-hudûrî*" is not restricted to self-knowledge; thus he demonstrates certain kinds of knowledge by presence. Sometimes he states generally that, on the one hand, either the relation of unification (*al-ittihâd*) or that of causality (*al-'illîya*) is a pre-condition for any kind of

knowledge, and, on the other hand, these two situations happen only within knowledge by presence.[7] At other times, he declares that there are different kinds of knowledge by presence, examining the division of knowledge into *al-'ilm al-husûlî* and *al-'ilm al-hudûrî*.[8]

Sabzavârî[9] and Tabâtabâ`î, in their notes on *Asfâr*,[10] expound three kinds of knowledge by presence. The former writes that "the immaterial thing's knowledge of its essence (*'ilm al-mujarrad bi-dhâtih*), the cause's knowledge of its effect (*'ilm-u al-shai` bi-ma'lûlih*), and the mortal thing's knowledge of the reality in which it is annihilated (*'ilm al-fânî bi-l-mufnâ fîh*) are three kinds of "*al-'ilm al-hudûrî*."[11]

In sum, he elsewhere asserts that there are two cases for knowledge by presence: unification (*al-ittihâd*) and causality (*al-'illîya*).[12] Tabâtabâ`î, in his note, indicates too the same statement, confirming the three cases of knowledge by presence.[13] Among the contemporary writers, Ha`irî also examines three kinds of knowledge by presence:

1. Immaterial being's knowledge of "itself,"

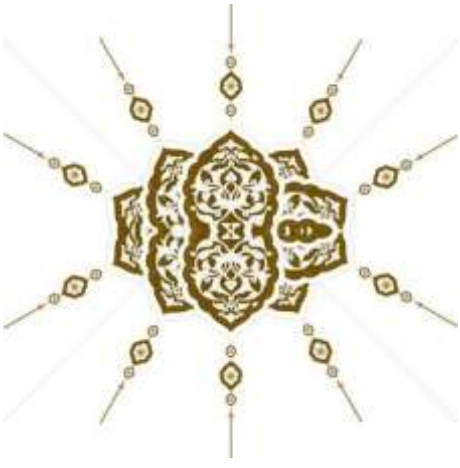
2. Immaterial being's knowledge of its attributes and actions,

3. Effect's knowledge of its immaterial cause.

He declares that the first is acceptable for all philosophers, namely the Peripatetics and Illuminationists, and the second is originated and demonstrated by Tûsî, and the third is allocated to mysticism.[14] To sum up the discussion, it could be said that our philosophers, Suhrawardî and Mullâ

Sadrâ, as well as their followers like Sabzavârî and Tabâtabâ`î, seem clearly to have accounted several kinds of *al-ʻilm al-hudûrî* in their epistemological system.

In the following chapters, we will examine certain disputed kinds of knowledge by presence: knowledge by presence of the human soul and knowledge by presence of God.



[1] In chapter 4, I shall attempt to give a detailed account of this kind of knowledge by presence, namely self-knowledge.

[2] For instance see: Fârâbî, *al-Rasâ`il*, *Risâlat fî Ithbât al-Mufâraqât*, pp. 3,5,7; *al-Taʻlîqât*, pp. 10,12-13; Ibn Sînâ, *al-Shifâ`, al-Nafs*, pp. 212-213; *al-Ishârât*, vol. 2, pp. 319-24, 334-42, vol. 3, p. 481, vol. 4, p. 709; *al-Najât,* p. 99; *al-Taʻlîqât,* pp. 77-81, 160-62; Fakhr al-Râzî, *al-Mabâhith al-Mashriqîya*, pp. 459-463; Tûsî, *Sharh Masʻalat al-ʻilm*, pp. 28,34. Although, in the case of the former philosophers such as Fârâbî or Ibn Sînâ, we don't find the exact term "*al-ʻilm al-hudûrî*" in their works, the

definition of self-knowledge (*al-'ilm bi-dhât*) they give us is more or less corresponding to what we meant by "*al-'ilm al-hudûrî*".

[3] *The Metaphysics of Sabzavari*, trans. and eds. M. Mohaghegh, T. Izutsu, (New York: Caravan Books, 1977), p. 212.

[4] Ibn Sînâ, *al-Ta'lîqât*, p. 80.

[5] We will examine their argumentations in the following chapters.

[6] Suhrawardî, *Opera* II, *Hikmat al-Ishrâq*, pp. 97-103, 134-5, 150.

[7] Mullâ Sadrâ, *Mafâtîh al-Ghaib*, pp. 108-9; *Asfâr*, III/1, pp. 162-4.

[8] Mullâ Sadrâ, *Asfâr*, I/3, pp. 319-20; III/1, pp. 161-4; *al-Mabda` wa al-Ma'âd*, pp. 34-7; *Risâla al-Tasawwur wa al-Tasdîq*, p. 308.

[9] Sabzavârî also, in his *Asrâr al-Hikam*, demonstrates three kinds of knowledge by presence. *Asrâr al-Hikam* (Tehran: Kitâbfurûshî-i Islâmîya, 1959),p. 61.

[10] The most important commentators on Mullâ Sadrâ's major work, the *Asfâr*, are Mullâ Hâdî Sabzavârî (d. 1289/1872) and 'Allâma Sayyed Muhammad Hosayn Tabâtabâ`î (d. 1402/1983).

[11] Sabzavârî, in his notes on *Asfâr*, I/3, p. 3

[12] Sabzavârî, in his notes on *Asfâr,* I/1, p. 288.

[13] Tabâtabâ`î, in his notes on *Asfâr*, I/3, p. 319.

[14] M. Hâ`irî, *Agâhî wa Gavâhî* (Tehran: Anjuman-i Islâmî-i Hikmat wa Falsafi Iran, 1981), pp. 5-6.

CHAPTER 4

The "human soul" and knowledge by presence

I. "Self" (a*l-dhât*)

One of the central problems of philosophy has been to prove the existence of a non-material entity which is generally referred to as "self," "mind", or "soul".[1]

In the history of Islamic philosophy, the issue has also received a notable attention and Muslim thinkers have often discussed the issue "self" (*nafs* or *dhât*). Both the peripatetic philosophers such as Fârâbî and Ibn Sînâ[2] and the illuminative thinkers such as Suhrawardî and Mullâ Sadrâ,[3] in numerous places, have argued for the existence and immateriality of "self" (*nafs*) which is distinct from the body. For both Fârâbî and Ibn Sînâ, the human soul (*al-nafs*) is ultimately an immaterial spiritual substance capable of existing independently of the body.[4] To prove that "self" (*al-nafs*) is an immaterial spiritual substance, Ibn Sînâ has had recourse to his famous argument of 'the floating man.' He states that a person can, under certain suppositions, affirm his own "self" (*dhât* or *anâ`îya*) without affirming the existence of his body.[5]

Suhrawardî holds that "self" (*nafs*) exists separated from the body. He argues that: "we often refer to ourselves and say "I" (*ana*) did this or that. If I would separate a part of myself (e.g., my hand) and put it on the table, I would neither refer to it as `I` nor would I be any different as far as my personality is concerned."[6] On this argumentation, he concludes that "self" or "I" is different from my body and thus it has to be immaterial. Then he argues that "self" (*nafs*) is above and beyond the body and there is a correlation between them. His argument goes as follows:

> Know that "*nafs*" (soul) was not present before the body. If it were present prior to it, it would have been neither one nor many; and this is impossible. The reason why a variety of souls (self) could not have existed before the body is because all things when they share in the same thing, i.e., soul, are one, and when they become numerous they become different... Therefore it becomes apparent that the soul cannot exist before the body and that they come into existence simultaneously.[7]

What we comprehend from this argumentation is that Suhrawardî elaborates the idea that "soul" as an incorporeal entity exists with the human body. In contrast to the body which is dark in itself, the "self" (soul) is light in itself; and it not the subject of changes. In addition, it could be concluded here that, according to Suhrawardî, a self-aware or self-luminous is given only in a direct experience of the self, through which I realize that my "self" (*dhâtî*) is not in a subject (*lâ fî mawdû'*), and it is nothing but existence and perception.[8]

Mullâ Sadrâ approaches the problem of "self" (*nafs*) from his principle of the "principiality of existence" (*asâlat al-wujûd*) in which he differs from Suhrawardî. According to this principle, the only reality is "existence" (*al-wujûd*) and quiddities are constructed by the mind.[9] Mullâ Sadrâ holds that whenever the soul is conceived as a concept and is defined, it will be found to be an essence. However, in a direct self-experience, the soul is only given as a pure existent, and since existence has no genus, it is not given in experience either as a substance or non-substance.[10] For Mullâ Sadrâ, direct, intuitive experience is the only way to know reality.[11] Thus the reality of the soul may be achieved through a direct experience.[12] In comparing with Suhrawardî's theory, as mentioned in *al-Talwîhât,*[13] Mullâ Sadrâ expresses the same explanation of the process of a direct self-experience.

Having analyzed and criticized the traditional doctrines, Mullâ Sadrâ elaborates his theory of "self" (*nafs*), as well as its relation with the body.[14] According to him, the soul is not eternal but originated and, thus, at its birth, it is in matter, developing towards immateriality. He ultimately maintains that the soul (self) is bodily in its origin and with regard to its governing function (*al-tasarruf*), but spiritual in its survival (*al-nafs jismânîyat al-hudûth wa al-tasarruf wa rûhânîyat al-baqâ`*).[15]

The soul first emerges as vegetative, then as perceptive and mover at the animal level, then as potential intellect, and finally as pure intellect. The soul has its being at all these levels and at each of these levels it is the same in a sense, and yet

different in a sense because the same being can pass through different levels of development. The soul does not emerge as a genuine and complete unity until it reaches the status of the acquired intellect.[16]

We can obviously see here that Mullâ Sadrâ applies his three fundamental principles: the "principiality of existence" (a*sâlat al-wujûd*), the "systematic ambiguity" (*al-tashkîk*), and the "substantive movement" (*al-harakat al-jawharîya*). By having recourse to these principles, he demonstrates that, on the one hand, the nature of human soul (*nafs*) is a kind of existence, and, on the other hand, there is an evolutionary change in the essence of the human soul.

Furthermore, to prove the human soul (self) and its separation from the body, Mullâ Sadrâ also applies the philosophers' argument from self-knowledge, i.e., a direct experience.[17] As we have seen above, the same argumentation is applied by Suhrawardî as well. It therefore seems that the main argument our sages rely on to prove the human soul is a kind of illuminative or intuitive experience, viz., self-knowledge. On the other side, in order to categorize the human soul "self" (*nafs*) in their philosophical system, Suhrawardî and Mullâ Sadrâ have apparently used their own terminology. In accordance with their philosophical languages, Suhrawardî categorizes "self" (*ana* or *nafs*) as "light" (*nûr*) because it is nonmaterial and, therefore, is present to itself,[18] whereas Mullâ Sadrâ categorizes it as "existence" (*wujûd*) because the reality of *nafs* is observed directly.[19]

It should be noted that we mean here by the technical term "self" and the related Arabic words such as "*al-nafs*," "*al-dhât*" and "*ana*" a more general meaning than "human soul." It involves, in the terminology of our discussion, the essence "*dhât*" of God as well.[20] In this respect Suhrawardî remarks that "the concept "*ana*" which involves the Necessary (Existent) and any other, is an entity which perceives itself`."[21] Therefore, in the following pages, we use the above words interchangeably, alluding to what constitutes the identity of a person, in the case of human "self," and to the essence of God, in the case of God's "self." Thus, in what follows, taking into consideration the immateriality of our disputed subject, i.e., *al-dhât* (self), we will examine two kinds of this entity: first one's knowledge of his own "self" (in this chapter) and, thereafter (in the following chapter), God's knowledge of His own "Self" (*al-Dhât*).

II. Self-knowledge (*al-'ilm bi al-dhât*)

The problem of self-knowledge, concerning an incorporeal entity, has received much consideration among Muslim philosophers. The peripatetic thinkers such as Fârâbî and Ibn Sînâ have explicitly paid attention to the issue and, in several places of their works, argued about the immateriality and self-awareness of the human soul (*nafs*). Fârâbî, identifying the human soul as an immaterial substance (*al-mufâraq*), argues that, on the problem of self-knowledge, the human soul directly perceives it's essence (*dhâtihâ*) without

any mediator or employing a bodily organ (*al-âlat*).[22] For Ibn Sînâ, who holds that the human soul is an immaterial spiritual substance capable of existing independently of the body, every immaterial entity, e.g., the human soul, is aware of "itself."[23] It is evident from their argument that "the human soul" knows "itself" by presence (i.e., without any mediator of form or concept) since it is nonmaterial, and every immaterial being is present for its essence.[24]

However, it is traditionally assumed that the Peripatetics confine "*al-'ilm al-hudûrî*" to "self-knowledge," while confining "*al-'ilm al-husûlî*" to "knowledge of anything other than "self."[25] Apart from the reservations made in the introduction of part two,[26] we may accept that, according to the Peripatetics, "self-knowledge" is essentially a kind of knowledge by presence "*al-'ilm al-hudûrî*."

Suhrawardî has examined the issue in several places of his works.[27] He argues that a being which has an essence (*al-dhât*) is either aware of its essence or not. If it is aware, then it cannot be dark, since "his essence is revealed for him."[28] He states:

> Anyone who has a reality of which he is never oblivious is not obscure [*ghâsiq* lit. crepuscular]. This is so because of the clarity and apparentness of his reality to himself. He is not a mode of darkness inherent in another thing, for even a mode of light cannot be light in itself let alone that of darkness. Therefore, he is an immaculate purity of light that cannot be located by physical indication.[29]

This statement that is based on his philosophy of Ishrâq indicates that human soul knows itself; and this is a reason, according to Suhrawardî, for its immateriality. The next step here is that Suhrawardî will be obliged to provide an answer to the question: How does one really know himself? In other words, what is the nature of "self-knowing," "self-awareness," or "self-consciousness"? Regarding our preceding discussion of the division of knowledge into "*al-ʻilm al-husûlî*" and "*al-ʻilm al-hudûrî*," under which of them is this kind of knowledge categorized?

Dealing thoughtfully with the question of self-consciousness, Suhrawardî gives us the answer in the light of his theory of knowledge. He argues that human soul knows "itself" by presence, without any mediator of form or idea (*mithâl*). In this regard he states:

> Since you are not absent from your own reality (*dhâtuk*) and from your awareness of that reality, and it is not possible that this awareness be by a representation or any superaddition, it thus follows that in this awareness of your reality you need not have anything besides the very reality of yourself, which is manifest to itself or, if you wish, not absent from itself.[30]

He gives us more details on the issue (self-knowledge) in his discussion with Aristotle. His famous dream-vision of Aristotle is recounted in full by him in the "*al-Talwîhât*,"[31] but mentioned in other places as well.[32]In this dream-vision Suhrawardî points to the significance of self-knowledge (*al-ʻilm bi al-dhât*) in the illuminative view of knowledge and perception.

The dream-vision is an allegory through which Suhrawardî expostulates his view of knowledge. He asked Aristotle the question of knowledge (*mas`alat al-ʿilm*). Aristotle's solution is: "return to your soul (or self), then you solve [the problem].[33]It seems evident that "the answer given by "Aristotle" to the fundamental question about "knowledge" provides the very basis of Suhrawardî's famous "knowledge by presence" (*al-ʿilm al-hudûrî* or *shuhûdî*)."[34] Since the dream-vision throws much light on Suhrawardî's theory of self-knowledge, some parts of it will be quoted at some length.

> Aristotle: "Think introvertively of yourself. (If you do so, you will certainly discover that your very selfhood) will then resolve (the problem) for you."
>
> Suhrawardî: "But how?"
>
> Aristotle: If you are really aware of yourself, then your awareness of yourself will (not) be (anything but) awareness by yourself. For, if it were in any other way, it would mean that there was another acting power (besides your own), or another knowing subject (besides yourself), that operated in yourself in knowing you. (It would not therefore be you who knew yourself. But it must be the case that you know yourself.). Thus we return to the same question (i.e. of whether or not you are aware of yourself by yourself), and this shows itself to be an obvious absurdity (i.e. it would go on ad infinitum)."
>
> Suhrawardî: "Assuming that you know yourself by yourself, (and not by anything else, the question then

becomes:) is (your knowledge of yourself) through the production of an effect from yourself in yourself?"

Aristotle: "All right (,let us assume the existence of such an effect)."

Suhrawardî: "But if a (certain) effect (which is actuated by yourself) does not correspond with the reality of yourself, then it is not true to say that you really know yourself."

Aristotle: "Then (let us assume), "I said," (that such an effect is a (true) representation of my own reality."

Suhrawardî: "does this representation belong to a universal self, or is it appropriated (to your individual selfhood) by (taking on) specific qualities?" (Of these alternatives) I chose the second.

Aristotle: "(Now) every representation (occurring) in the self (as the intellect) is a universal, even if it be qualified by many universal qualities (and restrictions, for) this (sort of multi-qualification) does not prevent (such a representation) being shared by (, and applicable to, many) individual selves. If it should happen that (a certain representation of this kind) is prevented (from applying to many), it must be for some accidental reason. But (undoubtedly) you know yourself (in such a way that your selfhood,) by (its) essential reality, refuses to be shared (by other selves). Therefore this (particular and unshared) apprehension (of yourself) cannot be by representation."[35]

In this discussion, self-knowledge is the primary question considered by Aristotle, and, thereafter, self-

consciousness and the concept of "I" (*ana*) have been regarded the grounds of knowledge. Through the initial consciousness of one's essence, a way to knowledge-called the "science based on presence and vision (*al-'ilm al-hudûrî al-shuhûdî*)- is conclusively gained.[36] What we may conclude from the argument, which is indicated in the discussion between Suhrawardî and Aristotle, is the fact that, according to Suhrawardî, the only way through which one is able to identify the reality of his essence (*al-dhât*), is "knowledge by presence" (*al-'ilm al-hudûrî*).

Mullâ Sadrâ also approaches the problem of "self-knowledge" in the light of his philosophical system (*al-hikmat al-muta'âlîya*). As we have seen above, to prove the human soul "*nafs*," Mullâ Sadrâ, on the one hand, has recourse to a basic, ontological principle "the principiality of existence" (*asâlat al-wujûd*) according to which the only reality is existence and quiddities are constructed by the mind.[37] Thanks to this principle, he holds that the human soul "*nafs*" is a form of existence (*nahw min al-wujûd*).

On the other hand, he maintains that direct, intuitive experience is the only way to know reality,[38] thus the reality of the soul could be achieved through a direct experience. In this kind of relationship, there is no formal or conceptual mediator between a person (as a knower) and his essence "*dhât*" (as an object known).

Consequently, when I refer to myself, Mullâ Sadrâ adds, and consider my essence directly, the only thing that I realize is my existence that perceives itself.[39] In this direct experience,

one doesn't rely on a form or concept to achieve his own "self," since any kind of form or concept (even the concept of "*ana*"), being universal, is outside of the reality of his essence (*dhâtihî*).[40]

To demonstrate that "knowledge by presence" is the only way through which one can achieve the reality of his own "self," Mullâ Sadrâ uses the same argumentation as Suhrawardî does. To sum up, it could be said that, according to them, it is certain that one's knowledge of his own "self," to which he refers as his "I," is a kind of knowledge by presence. A generally cited argument, which is found also in Ibn Sînâ's writings,[41] is summarized as following:

One cannot fail to be conscious of his own self in any circumstance, in solitude or in others' company, in sleep or wakefulness, or in any other state.

This consciousness is not by virtue of the presence of the quiddity of the "self" before us; it is not present as a concept, or known through mediated knowledge. That is because a mental concept, of whatever kind, is always capable of corresponding to a multiplicity of objects, and (when pertaining to a particular object) its individuality is only due to the external existent (to which it corresponds).

Now, that which we recognize in relation to ourselves–that we refer to as "I"–is something essentially individuated, incapable of corresponding to multiple things. Individuality (*al-tashakhkhus*) is a property of existence; hence our knowledge of our selves is by virtue of their presence for us with their very external existence, which is the ground of individuation and

external effects. This is a kind of knowledge called "immediate knowledge" (*al-ʿilm al-hudûrî*; literally, "knowledge by presence").[42]

Generally speaking, it might be said that they (i.e., Suhrawardî and Mullâ Sadrâ) have actually thought over the problem of self-knowledge (*al-ʿilm bi al-dhât*) within their philosophical system. Hence their theory, in this regard, seems to have been considered in the light of their whole system which is known as illuminative philosophy.

Consequently, apart from the usage of their own languages (i.e., "light" or "existence"), it seems that, as we have seen above, there is no obvious difference between our sages in both the way of argumentation and the result on which they demonstrate the theory of "self-knowledge."

III. The human soul knows its "attributes," "dispositions" and "faculties" by presence

The human soul–whether it is defined as a faculty or power inherent in the body, or as a spiritual substance capable of existing independently of the body–develops into an actualized intellect and can think immaterial forms. Psychologically, there are certain attributes, dispositions, and faculties or "inner senses" that are imputed to the human soul, with which the soul has been, in its turn, defined or characterized by philosophers since antiquity.[43] In this part of discussion, we are expected to examine the epistemological

relationship between the human soul and its related entities, with regard to our philosophers' doctrine.

Suhrawardî, who believes that "self" (*nafs*) exists distinctly from the body, maintains that the human soul employs the body and operates within it, using several powers and faculties. The soul, according to him, directly apprehends the body, its powers and faculties, without employing any form or bodily organ.[44] In certain places of his works, Suhrawardî elaborates this doctrine, pursuing his idea of self-knowledge that occurs directly for the soul.[45] In his al-Mashâri', Suhrawardî goes into somewhat more detail arguing as follows:

> The self does in fact apprehend its body as well as its imagination and its phantasm. The supposition that these things are apprehended through a representation inherent in the reality of the self, while the representation as such is universal, would imply that the self is the mover of a universal body, using universal mental powers, and has no apprehension of its particular body nor acquaintance with the powers that belong to itself.
>
> This [consideration] is obviously not right. For the imagination is ignorant of [cannot apprehend] itself, just as it is ignorant of all the mental powers, even if it cannot challenge the effects of these powers in actual operation. Now, if the imagination is not competent to realize either itself or these mental powers, no material power can ever understand the truth of itself. And if the self [as an intellect] were also not supposed to know anything other than universals, then it would

> necessarily follow that a man would never know his own particular body, his own particular imagination, and his own particular phantasm, all of which pertain to himself. But this is not actually the case, because in the world of reality there are no human beings who do not know in presence their own particular bodies and their own particular mental powers while using their own particular powers. The conclusion is that man knows himself and all his mental powers with no mediation of any mental image, and knows the entirety of his body in the same manner.[46]

In this argument, Suhrawardî approaches a traditional question whether the human soul is able to apprehend particulars or its capacity is restricted to the apprehension of universals. He replies by arguing that, on the one hand, if a self (nafs) as an intellect knows only universals, then he would never know particulars such as his own particular body, his own particular imagination, and his own particular phantasm.

On the other hand, the human soul (self) knows directly his own particular body and other particulars. Consequently, the soul is, according to Suhrawardî, able to conceive particulars. Nevertheless, it seems that Suhrawardî takes for granted that the human soul (self or nafs) apprehends directly its own body, its own powers and phantasm, without using any form or bodily organ. To support his idea, Suhrawardî continues his argument:

> One of the things that support our opinion that we do have some kind of apprehensions (*idrâkât*) which need not take a form of representation (*sûra*) other than the

> presence of the reality (*dhât*)[47] of the thing apprehended (*mudrak*), is when a man is in pain from a cut or from damage to one of his organs. He then has a feeling of this damage. But this feeling or apprehension is never in such a way that that damage leaves in the same organ of the body or in another a form of representation of itself besides the reality of itself. Rather, the thing apprehended is but that damage itself. This is what is truly sensible and it counts in itself for pain, not a representation of it, caused by itself. This proves that, there are among things apprehended by us some things such that in being apprehended, it is sufficient that their reality be received in the mind or in any agent which is present in the mind.[48]

The thesis Suhrawardî is putting forward, in his discussion so far, is the fact that the human soul, besides its direct apprehension of itself, has its direct experience of certain entities, e.g., its powers, faculties and internal states. The principles of his argument are evident, for, according to the definition he gives us, the direct experience occurs in a case in which there would not be any veil or obstacle between a perceiver and something perceived. In the case of the human soul and its particular relatives, these particulars, according to Suhrawardî, exist at the presence of the soul and, therefore, the soul directly perceives them as it knows itself by presence.

The question of the epistemological relationship of the soul to its particular relatives has received a special consideration among Muslim philosophers. In this respect, Tûsî's view of the problem will be briefly mentioned. Tûsî,[49]

evidently following the same line of thought, maintains that "just as an apprehender (*al-ʿâqil*) in perceiving his own essence through his essence does not require a form other than the form of his own essence through which he is what he is, so also in perceiving that which emanates from his essence he does not need any form other than the form of the emanation through which the emanation is what it is."[50] Let us examine Tûsî's argument. He begins with an example:

> Consider your own case when you apprehend something by means of a form which you have imagined or brought to mind. This form does not emanate absolutely from you alone, but rather with a certain participation of something else. Nevertheless, you do not apprehend this form through another form, but rather, just as you apprehend that thing through the form, so also do you apprehend the form itself through that same form without there being any doubling of forms within you. Indeed, the only things that double are your (mental) consideration (*iʿtibârât*) connected with your essence and that form only by way of superimposition (*al-tarakkub*).[51]

Tûsî has elaborated this argument about the problem of God's knowledge. In this part of his argumentation, he attempts to prove his theory thanks to a direct self-experience. Tûsî considers certain that this kind of experience is undoubted, for everyone may procure the self-experience in his own self. What we understand from Tûsî's argument is that there is no mediator between the soul and what happens in it like a form or a concept. In this argument, his attempt is to show us the fact that the imagination or perception of the

form which exists in oneself does not happen through another form, rather one apprehends the form without there being any doubling of forms within him. Elsewhere, he explicitly declares that the human soul directly apprehends itself, its organs (*âlâtihâ*), and its intellections (*ta'aqqulâtihâ*), without employing any intermediary organ.[52]

The same doctrine is also taken into account by Mullâ Sadrâ. He accepts Aristotle's definition of the soul as entelechy of the body insofar as it operates through faculties. According to him, the soul cannot as such be separate and independent of matter. The soul, he holds, is at its birth, in matter and gradually develops through a spiritual path insofar as it becomes free from some aspects of matter and the material body[53] This Sadrian account of the development of the human soul is related to his doctrine of "substantive movement" (*al-haraka al-jawharîya*) which lies at the root of his system.[54] Mullâ Sadrâ, as seen earlier, has established his theory of the existence and development of the soul on some of his fundamental principles such as the principiality of existence (*asâlat al-wujûd*), the systematic ambiguity (*al-tashkîk fi al-wujûd*), and the substantive motion (*al-haraka al-jawharîya*).

The relationship of the soul to the body is in such a way that the soul works through organs which means not only "physical organs" like hands, liver or stomach, but also "faculties or powers" like nutrition and digestion.[55] Mullâ Sadrâ's interpretation raises the soul from the status of a purely physical form to a form that, although in matter, is capable of transcending it.

The non-material human soul, which, being the ultimate form for its species, despite its simplicity, is the source of all its excellencies (*al-kamâlât*) and effects (*al-âthâr*) that it possesses in its essence. In addition, for Mullâ Sadrâ, "the soul is all of the faculties" (*al-nafs kull al-quwâ*).[56] This theory is understood on the basis of his general principle that "a simple nature is everything" (*basît al-haqîqa kull al-ashyâ`*). Faculties are the "modes" (*shu`ûn*) or "manifestations" (*mazâhir*) of the soul.[57]

Based on this ontological relation between the soul and its faculties and powers, there is also, according to Mullâ Sadrâ, a direct epistemological relation between them. The human soul's direct knowledge (*al-'ilm al-hudûrî*) of itself is a detailed knowledge of its faculties, powers, and excellencies, although these are not distinguished from one another. Keeping its unity and connecting extension, the soul, in its developing movement, reaches a level in which it is able to create something like a form or an idea in its world.

For Mullâ Sadrâ, as we saw in our discussion of "*ibsâr*," the soul operates as an agent in the process of sensitive and imaginative perception. That is to say, the external world, on the one hand, prepares some necessary conditions of the act of perceiving, and the soul, on the other hand, makes an immaterial form corresponding to the external object. Consequently, the existent of the form (in any sort of perception), being at the presence of the soul, is directly perceived by the soul.[58] To support this doctrine, Mullâ Sadrâ states:

> everything that man perceives and sees directly by means of his imaginal faculty and his interior sense does not at all inhere in the body of the brain or in some power inhering in that area; nor is it located in the bodies of the heavenly spheres or in a world separated from the soul, as some followers of the illuminationist (philosophers) have mentioned. Instead, it subsists in the soul–not like something inhering in something else, but rather like an act subsisting through its agent.[59]

Rejecting the other doctrines, Mullâ Sadrâ goes on arguing for his own theses. He demonstrates his doctrine on the basis of his understanding of the human soul. For Mullâ Sadrâ, the ontological relationship between the soul, on the one side, and its forms, concepts, faculties, powers, and internal states, on the other side, is an especial relation which is based on the agency of the soul. According to his point of view, the internal forms, concepts, faculties, powers, attributes, and dispositions are the "modes" (*shu`ûn*) or "manifestations" (*mazâhir*) of the soul.[60] This multiplicity, in the case of the soul and its states, refers to unity (*al-kathra yarji'u ilâ al-wahda*), for "the soul is all of the faculties" and, therefore, it keeps its unity and simplicity in all levels.[61]

The development of the soul is marked by successive stages of increasing unity and simplicity. The soul, at the highest stage of its development, resembles God, for God, in His absolute simplicity, comprehends everything.[62] Such a soul begins to function like God and creates forms from within itself.

> It is not impossible, though, that a single essence (that is, the soul) might become so perfected and increase so much in the strength of its essence and the intensity of its stage (of being) that it could become in its essence the basis of something for which it was not previously a basis, and the source of things that had not developed in it before. This is (not impossible) because of the great extent of (the soul's) field of being.[63]

By proving a particular ontological relation of the soul to its faculties and powers, Mullâ Sadrâ goes on arguing that the epistemological relation between them occurs within the framework of "knowledge by presence." As the soul directly knows itself without any conceptual mediator, it knows and conceives directly its faculties and powers, as well as its attributes and dispositions.[64]

To prove his theory, Mullâ Sadrâ has recourse to the argument that, on the one hand, the faculties and other attributes and powers inhere in the soul. On the other hand, when something inheres in something else, such that the being of that first thing in itself is the same as its being in that in which it inheres (*wujûduhû fî nafsih huwa wujûduhû fî mahallih*), it follows that:

> When something inheres in something else, such that the being of that first thing in itself is the same as its being in that in which it inheres, then it is impossible for its own being to be in one world and for the being of that in which it inheres to be in another world. Therefore, the inhering thing and that in which it

> inheres are in one world, so that which perceives and that which is perceived are of one mode (of being).[65]

Furthermore, Mullâ Sadrâ examines the arguments on which both Suhrawardî and Tûsî rely, as seen earlier. Mullâ Sadrâ argues that whenever one uses his powers or faculties, he is using particular powers and faculties, not universal ones. Hence, he apprehends them particularly and intuitively without any formal or conceptual mediator. In addition, any kind of form or concept which is perceived through the mind, Mullâ Sadrâ adds, is universal, whereas we apprehend ourselves and in particular forms. Consequently, we do not apprehend ourselves and our faculties and powers through the universal forms or concepts.[66]

Finally, Mullâ Sadrâ concludes that the first knowledge which appears for every body, in the very beginning of his life, is his knowledge of his own "self" and then his knowledge of his own powers and faculties. These kinds of knowledge are essentially "knowledge by presence."[67]

Mullâ Sadrâ–in his discussion of the issue, that is, the human soul and its intuitive knowledge of its powers and faculties–has pursued a rational-intuitive path according to which he formulates his own doctrine. As we have seen above, he has recourse to certain Aristotelian principles, as well as several illuminative bases. To establish his ultimate conclusion, he also relies on some mystical principles which had been developed in Ibn 'Arabî's system.

Based on these principles, Mullâ Sadrâ organizes his theory of the ontological and epistemological relation of the human soul

to its faculties, powers, attitudes and dispositions. He ultimately holds that the human soul, at the highest stage of its development, begins to function like God and creates something from within itself.

At this stage, the Perfect Man, as we find in Ibn 'Arabî's teachings, must function directly through the simplicity and unity of his mind.[68] Thanks to this conception, Mullâ Sadrâ develops his doctrine of the essential "creativity" of the soul (*khallâqîyat al-nafs*). Based on this doctrine, the faculties and powers are essentially at the presence of the human soul; and the human soul apprehends them directly, without any formal or conceptual mediator.

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[1] In this regard, there are some technical Arabic terms such as *nafs*, *rûh*, *dhât* which are interchangeably used by Muslim thinkers. In the case of the identity of a person, these terms are represented to the term *ana* (I).

[2] For Fârâbî's point of view see: *al-Rasâ`il*, *Risâla fî Ithbât al-Mufâraqât*, pp. 3,5,7; *al-Ta'lîqât*, pp. 10,12-13; *al-Madîna al-Fâdila*, p. 53; for Ibn Sînâ's theory see: *al-Shifâ`,* al-Nafs, chapter 6, *al-Ishârât*, vol. 2, pp. 319-24, 334-42. In this connection, for more details see: F. Rahman, *Avicenna's Psychology*, pp. 24-68; *Prophecy in Islam* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1958), Chapter I, Section 1,2.

[3] Suhrawardî's view on the existence of a self in his Persian works can be found in the following works: *Hayâkil al-Nûr*, pp. 4-92; *al-Alwâh al-'Imâdîyah*, pp. 116-165; *Bustân al-Qulûb*, pp. 342-387; and *Yazdân Shinâkht*, pp. 412-444. In his Arabic works, he discusses the issue in the *al-Talwîhât,* pp. 68,81,82. Suhrawardî in *Partaw-Nâmah* (Opera III, pp. 23-24) offers several arguments for the existence of a "self" (*nafs*) and

its independence of the body. Mullâ Sadrâ also allocated one part of his major work *Asfâr* to the issue. *Asfâr*, IV/1.

[4] Fârâbî, *al-Rasâ`il*, *Risâlat fî Ithbât al-Mufâraqât*, pp. 3,5,7; *al-Ta'lîqât,* pp. 10,12-13; *al-Madîna al-Fâdila*, p. 53; Ibn Sînâ, *al-Shifâ`,* al-Nafs, chapter 6, *al-Ishârât*, vol. 2, pp. 319-24, 334-42.

[5] Ibn Sînâ, *al-Ishârâ*t., vol. 2, *al-namat* 3, pp. 319-323. See also F. Rahman, *Avicenna's Psychology* (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), pp. 50-62.

[6] *Opera* III, *Partaw-nâma*, pp. 23-4 (trans. by M. Aminrazavi in *Suhrawardî's Theory of Knowledge*, p. 124). For another argumentation of Suhrawardî, see p. 58 in the preceding chapter.

[7] Ibid., pp. 25-6 (trans. by M. Aminrazavi in *Suhrawardî's Theory of Knowledge*, p. 125).

[8]Suhrawardî, *Opera* I,*al-Talwîhât*,p.115.

[9] Mullâ Sadrâ, in his major work *Asfâr* has devoted four chapters to the discussion of the principiality of existence (*asâlat al-wujûd*). He mentions some views, as well as their objections, and answers one by one. Finally, he demonstrates his own doctrine by several arguments. *Asfâr*, I/1, pp. 38-74.

[10] Mullâ Sadrâ, *Asfâr*, IV/1, pp. 11-14.

[11]Mullâ Sadrâ,*al-Mashâ'ir*,p.30. *al-Mashâ'ir* is one of the famous works of Mullâ Sadrâ in Metaphysics. It has been edited and translated into French by Henry Corbin entitled as *Le Livre des pénétrations métaphysiques* (Paris and Tehran, 1965), and into English by Parviz Morewedge entitled as *The Metaphysics of Mullâ Sadrâ* (New York: SSIPS, 1992).

[12] *Asfâr*, IV/1, pp. 47-8.

[13] See above, n. 8.

[14] Ibid., pp. 11-23.

[15] Ibid., pp. 326-7, 347.

[16] Ibid., pp. 51, 121-3, 134-6.

[17] Ibid., pp. 47-8.

[18] Suhrawardî, *Opera* II, *Hikmat al-Ishrâq*, pp. 110-111. It should be noted that sometimes Suhrawardî uses the term "*wujûd*" (existence) in his examination of self-experience. See above, n. 8.

[19] Mullâ Sadrâ, *Asfâr*, IV/1, p. 47. However, we have seen before, in chapter 1 (p. 23), that Mullâ Sadrâ has interpreted the illuminative term "*nûr*" in his own terminology as "*wujûd*."

[20] The problem of God's knowledge of His Essence (*al-'ilm bi-dhâtihî*) will be examined in the following chapter.

[21] Suhrawardî, *Opera* I, *al-Talwîhât*, p. 116.

[22] Fârâbî, *Risâlat fî Ithbât al-Mufâriqât*, pp. 3, 7.

[23] Ibn Sînâ, *al-Ishârât*., vol. 2, *al-namat* 3, pp. 319-323.

[24] Ibn Sînâ, *al-Ta'lîqât*, pp. 79,80,82.

[25] Sabzavârî, *Sharh Manzûma*, p. 185.

[26] See above, pp. 70-74.

[27] Suhrawardî, *Opera I, al-Talwîhât*, pp. 69-75; *al-Mashâri'*, pp. 484-489; *Opera II, Hikmat al-Ishrâq*, pp. 110-116

[28] *Opera*, II, *Hikmat al-Ishrâq*, p. 110.

[29] Ibid., pp. 110-111 (trans. by M. Ha`irî, as stated in *The principle of Epistemology in Islamic Philosophy*, p. 72).

[30] Ibid., p. 112.

[31] Suhrawardî, *Opera I, al-Talwîhât*, pp. 70-74. For more explanation, see M. Ha`irî, *Knowledge by Presence*, pp. 121-165.

[32] Suhrawardî, *Opera I*, *al-Mashâri',* p. 484.

[33] Suhrawardî, *Opera I*, *al-Talwîhât*, p.70.

[34] H. Landolt, "Suhrawardî's "Tales of initiation," *Journal of The American Oriental Society*, vol. 107, no. 3 (July-September, 1987), p. 480.

[35] *Opera* I, *al-Talwîhât*, p. 70 (trans. by M. Ha`irî as stated in *Knowledge by Presence*, pp. 329-330).

[36] Ibid., pp. 70-4.

[37] Mullâ Sadrâ, *Asfâr*, I/1, pp. 38-74.

[38] *al-Mashâ'ir*, p. 30.

[39] *Asfâr*, IV/1, pp. 47-8.

[40] Ibid., III/1, pp. 156-7.

[41] Ibn Sînâ, *al-Ta'lîqât*, pp. 79,160,161,162.

[42] For Suhrawardî see: *Opera* II, *Hikmat al-Ishrâq*, pp. 111-113; for Mullâ Sadrâ see: *al-Mabda` wa al-Ma'âd*, pp. 80-83.

[43] See F. Rahman, *Avicenna's Psychology* (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), pp. 25-40.

[44] *Opera* I, *al-Talwîhât*, pp. 71-3.

[45] *Ibid*., pp. 71-3; *al-Mashâri',* pp. 484-5.

[46] *Opera* I, *al-Mashâri',* p.484-5. (trans. by M. Hâ`irî as stated in *The principle of Epistemology in Islamic Philosophy*, p. 94-95).

[47] The translator, M. Hâ`irî, here prefers the word "reality" as the more suitable translation of *dhât*.

[48] *Opera* I, *al-Mashâri',* p.485. (trans. by M. Hâ`irî as stated in *The principle of Epistemology in Islamic Philosophy*, p. 94-95).

[49] The important thirteenth century philosopher, scientist, and Shî'îte theologian Nasîr al-Dîn al-Tûsî was a great follower of Ibn Sînâ, and one of the most important commentator on his *al-Ishârât*. He was, however, influenced by certain views of the Illuminationist philosophers, although the exact extent and nature of this influence still needs to be closely determined.

[50] Tûsî, in his notes on Ibn Sînâ's *al-Ishârât wa al-Tanbîhât*, vol. 3, al-namat 7, pp. 714-15 (trans. by N. Heer in his translation of Jâmî's *al-Durra al-Fâkhira*, p. 46).

[51] Ibid., pp. 714-715.

[52] Tûsî, *Sharh-i Mas`alat al-'ilm* (Mashhad: Matba'a Jâmi'a, 1965), p. 37.

[53] Mullâ Sadrâ, *Asfâr*, IV/1, pp. 12-14. See above, p. 78.

[54] The doctrine of "substantial movement" has been considered as a novel theory demonstrated by Mullâ Sadrâ Shîrâzî. He has discussed the issue and its related problems in detail in *Asfâr*, I/3, pp. 80-113. For more explanation, see F. Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullâ Sadrâ* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1975), pp. 94-124.

[55] *Asfâr*, IV/1, pp. 16-17.

[56] Ibid., p. 51, 120-123, 133-5, 221-230.

[57] Ibid., pp. 133-6.

[58] Mullâ Sadrâ, *Ta'lîqa 'alâ Sharh-i Hikmat al-Ishrâq*, p. 454.

[59] Mullâ Sadrâ, *al-'Arshîya*, pp. 237-8 (trans. by J.W. Morris as stated in *The Wisdom of the Throne*, p. 138).

[60] A very similar idea has been already held by Suhrawardî. In his *Hikmat al-Ishrâq* (p.213).

[61] Mullâ Sadrâ, *Asfâr*, IV/1, pp. 51-2, 73-77, 133-6.

[62] Ibid., p. 121.

[63] Mullâ Sadrâ, *al-'Arshîya*, p. 228 (trans. by J.W. Morris as stated in *The Wisdom of the Throne*, p. 115).

[64] Mullâ Sadrâ, *Asfâr*, III/1, pp. 157-164.

[65] Mullâ Sadrâ, *al-'Arshîya*, p. 236 (trans. by J.W. Morris as stated in *The Wisdom of the Throne*, p. 134).

[66] Mullâ Sadrâ, *Asfâr*, III/1, pp. 157-9; *al-Mabda` wa al-Ma'âd*, pp. 80-1.

[67] Ibid., p. 161; *al-Mabda` wa al-Ma'âd*, p. 81.

[68] *Asfâr*, IV/1, p. 140-142.

CHAPTER 5

God and "Knowledge by presence"

The problem of God's knowledge has a long story in the history of Islamic thought. Without exaggeration the discussion of God's knowledge has received a remarkably profound consideration by Muslim thinkers, namely theologians, philosophers and Sûfîs.[1] Mullâ Sadrâ enumerates no less than ten different views on this issue.[2] I don't aim to give a detailed account of the history of this problem here, but we may safely examine the view points of our sages, Suhrawardî and Mullâ Sadrâ, bearing in mind the scope of our disputed subject, viz., knowledge by presence. Concerning the organization of our study, we shall make a distinction between two parts of God's knowledge: that of His Essence, and that of His effects. The former is discussed in the following pages, and, thereafter, we will examine the latter in the present chapter.

I. God's knowledge of His Essence (*al-'ilm bi-dhâtihî*)

Thanks to our philosopher's system of thought, the issue of God's knowledge of His Essence has received an

illuminative outlook and is interpreted in the framework of their epistemological theory, i.e., knowledge by presence. Nevertheless, the doctrine itself had a long history before them, especially in the Peripatetic (*al-mashshâ`*) philosophy and Islamic theology (*kalâm*).

It is historically evident that most philosophers who have in any way addressed the problem of God's knowledge of His Essence have accounted it in a framework excluding any external agent or mediator, i.e., in a way preparing what came to be known as knowledge by presence.[3] The peripatetic philosophers, like Fârâbî and Ibn Sînâ, have maintained that God knows His essence by presence, without any form or concept.[4]In this regard, Ibn Sînâ argues:

> Al-Bârî (The Necessary Existent) apprehends His Essence (*dhâtahû*) since the existence of His essence belongs to Himself. And every entity apprehending an essence, that essence occurs to the same entity in-itself (*fî dhâtihâ*).[5]

Ibn Sînâ then goes on arguing that His knowledge of His Essence does not require a form superadded to Him. Therefore, the First (*al-awwal*) apprehends His Essence without there being any difference (*taghâyur*), with respect to existence (*fi al-wujûd*), between His Essence and His apprehension of His Essence , except in the consideration (*fi al-i'tibâr*).[6]

Relating to the theory of God's knowledge, Suhrawardî considers two separate issues: God's knowledge of His Essence and God's knowledge of the things. Concerning the former,

Suhrawardî states that God (the Light of Lights) is a pure Light that exists in itself (*al-qâ`im bi al-dhât*). This kind of being knows itself by presence, without any form or idea. He argues:

> A thing that exists in itself (*al-qâ`im bi al-dhât*) and is conscious of itself does not know itself through a representation (*al-mithâl*) of itself appearing in itself.[7]

In this argument, Suhrawardî simply elaborates the fact that self-consciousness which happens for an immaterial entity should be a direct experience, free from idea or formal mediator, and also free from material organs. The Pure Light is completely free from darkness (that is, in his language, matter or material entity), and as such apprehends itself without any intermediary or representation. Apart from his illuminative terminology, the structure of this argument, as we have seen above, is found in Ibn Sînâ.

Regarding the same question, Mullâ Sadrâ demonstrates his theory of God's knowledge of His Essence in the light of his philosophical system (*al-hikma al-muta'âlîa*). On the one hand, he holds that "every comprehension is realized due to some mode of abstraction from matter and its obstacles."[8] On the other hand, he believes that the reality of knowledge essentially refers to the reality of existence. In this regard, he states that "His knowledge is reducible to His Being."[9] He adds: "knowledge is nothing but presence of existence without any obstacles."[10] Thanks to these fundamental principles, Mullâ Sadrâ elaborates his argumentation of God's knowledge of His Essence. He states:

> It [The Necessary Existent] is (purely) simplicity in its inner-reality (and thus is) independent of contamination from imperfection, contingency and privation. Any entity that is in this manner, its inner-reality is present to itself without impediment (lit. Veil). Knowledge is nothing but presence of existence without any obstacle... The highest degree of intelligibles is the most forceful in existence–and That is The Necessary Existent. His inner-being intellects His (very) inner-being.[11]

Mullâ Sadrâ, having recourse to his terminology of "existence" (*al-wujûd*), contrary to Suhrawardî who used the term "light" (*al-nûr*), refines the same argument the result of which could be summarized as follows: The Necessary Existent (viz., Light of Lights in Suhrawardî's language) is a Pure Existent (or Pure Light) and free from material. The incorporeal existent is present to itself because there is no ontological veil between that and its essence. In addition, according to Sadrian definition of knowledge, knowledge is nothing but presence of existence without any obstacles. Therefore, being present to itself, the Necessary Existence is directly aware of itself. On this stage, the unity of the intellect, intelligible and intellection, as Mullâ Sadrâ demonstrates, occurs in a very high level.[12]

Apart from their different languages, notably the terms "light" (*al-nûr*) and "existence" (*al-wujûd*)–our sages have relied on the same key principles in their arguments. For both, the First (The Light of Lights or The Necessary Existent) is pure, single (*basît*), incorporeal (*mujarrad*), being ontologically at the presence of itself. Thus, the result of this presence, for both, is

an epistemological relation between God and His Essence (*dhâtihî*). Consequently, one can plausibly claim that these two thinkers, on this very issue, have pursued the same argument that led them to the same conclusion.

As we have observed so far–on the problem of self-knowledge, particularly God's knowledge of His Essence (*dhâtihî*)–there is no serious difference, concerning the result of their arguments, between the Peripatetic philosopher Ibn Sînâ and the illuminationists such as Suhrawardî and Mullâ Sadrâ, although they rely on particular routes and examine various arguments. It is generally acceptable for both sides that, on the one hand, the essence of God is entirely pure and immaterial. On the other hand, the process of self-knowledge, in the case of immaterial entity, happens directly, for there is no veil or obstacle between an "immaterial entity" and its essence.

II. Causal relationship (*al-ʻillîya*)

It seems that the problem of causation (*al-ʻillîya*) has been implied, as we shall see, as the key principle in a rational discussion of God's knowledge of things. We begin by explaining this key element, after which we shall turn to the problem of God's knowledge.

It is historically evident that the question of causation has a long story in the history of human thought. The discussion of causal relationship, as well as a number of serious

debates, goes back to Plato and Aristotle. Generally speaking, the two-fold principles of causation could be defined in such a way that "a cause has traditionally been thought of as that which produces something and in terms of which that which is produced, its effect, can be explained. That which is caused might be either some new substance or simply a change in something that already exists."[13] The close relation between cause and its effect is one of the crucial items that have been considered in this regard. Examining the above definition of the causation, R. Taylor states that "it was also generally supposed by philosophers that there is a certain necessary or inherent connection between any cause and its effect. By this is meant that the joint occurrence of both is not "accidental"–that a cause is something which is such that, once given its effect cannot fail to occur–and that a cause compels the occurrence of its effect–that the effect must happen in case the cause exists." [14]

Regarding the question of causation and the necessary relation between cause and effect, philosophers have demonstrated several kinds of causes. Aristotle, drawing upon the traditions of his predecessors, distinguished four quite different kinds of causes or explanatory principles. These he called the "efficient" cause (*causa quod*), or that by which some change is wrought; the "final" cause (*causa ut*), or end or purpose for which a change is produced; the "material" cause, or that in which a change is wrought; and the "formal" cause, or that into which something is changed.[15]

Muslim philosophers, who paid attention to the question of causation, have considered Aristotelian theory and, reasonably, accepted his classification of cause and effect. Similarly, they classified causes into "internal" and "external." The "internal causes" (*al-ʻilal al-dâkhilîyah*, also called *ʻilal al-qiwâm*, the causes of subsistence) are "matter" (*mâdda*) and "form" (*sûra*), which make the effect subsist. The "external causes" (*al-ʻilal al-khârijîyyah*, also called *ʻilal al-wujûd*, the causes of existence) are the "agent" (*al-fâʻil*, i.e., efficient cause) and the "end" (*al-ghâyah*, final goal, i.e., the final cause). The "agent" is sometimes called "m*â bihi al-wujûd*" (that on which the effect's existence depends) and the "end" "*mâ li ajlihi al-wujûd*" (the *raison d'etre*).[16]

For our own purposes here, what is more disputed, from the above kinds of causes, is the third cause, the "efficient cause" (*al-ʻilla al-fâʻilîya*), i.e., one which gives existence to the effect. Muslim philosophers have defined the "causal relationship" between the "efficient cause" and its effect in such a way that the existence of the effect derives from the existence of the cause; that is the efficient cause. In other words, the existence of the effect depends on the existence of the cause and, by contrast, the existence of the cause is independent from the existence of the effect.[17] Ontologically, this definition seems to show a close relation between the "efficient cause" and its effect to the extent that the need of the effect for the cause is nothing except the need of its existence for the cause and that need is not separate from its existence, in the sense that there is existence *and* need.[18]

The causal connection between God (as an efficient cause "*al-ʿilla al-fâʿilîya*") and the things is regarded as an epistemological one. The epistemological relation between this kind of cause, i.e., the efficient cause, and its effect the existence of which is inseparable from that of its cause, seems to be interpreted and demonstrated as "knowledge by presence" in the philosophy of both Suhrawardî and Mullâ Sadrâ. In what follows, I will attempt to concisely approach the epistemological relation between God and His effects, rather than their ontological relationship.

III. God's knowledge of the things

The question of God's knowledge of things (e.g., His effects, universals and particulars) has been a major issue among Muslim thinkers, theologians (*mutakallimûn*), philosophers and Sufîs.[19] Our philosophers, Mullâ Sadrâ and Suhrawardî, have given special consideration to the question of God's knowledge of the things, a question around which has centered a great deal of controversy between philosophers and theologians (*mutakallimûn*) for centuries.[20] Mullâ Sadrâ cites and discusses more than ten different views on this issue.[21] All of these groups have given diversified rational, traditional and intuitive proofs for the positions they have taken and attempted refutations of the positions of their opponents. The complete verification of these opinions would require a detailed discussion that cannot be contained in this book, being beyond the purpose of this study.

Thus, the main aim here is to examine our two sages' consideration of the epistemological relation between God and His effects, bearing in mind their rational background and illuminative method.

The peripatetic philosophers, such as Ibn Sînâ and his followers, maintain that His attributes are identical with His essence; and, in the case of His knowledge of things, He knows His effects through their forms established in His essence (viz., He knows the universals directly and the particulars through their universal forms).[22] On God's knowledge of the particulars, it was held that, according to the Peripatetics, God cannot know particulars since such knowledge would involve change in God. To overcome this difficulty, Ibn Sînâ has devised the theory that "God knows all particulars but in a universal way." The substance of this theory is that God, being the ultimate cause of all things, knows the whole range of causes and effects and their relations and hence knows all particulars, not as particulars but as universals.[23] This eternal knowledge in God, therefore, is changeless, since it does not depend upon sense perception that is liable to change.[24] Suhrawardî has summarized The Peripatetic theory as follows:

> The Peripatetics and their followers say that the knowledge of the Necessary Existent is not something additional to it; rather it is its lack of absence from its own immaterial essence. They argue that the existence of things results from the Necessary Existent's knowledge of them.[25]

It is true that Ibn Sînâ's aim is to establish (a) the changeless character of God's knowledge, (b) the fact that

God's knowledge precedes the existence of things and does not follow them, and (c) the fact that God's knowledge is creative (*fi'lî*) and not receptive (*infi'âlî*) as human knowledge is.[26] Ibn Sînâ's theory that was attributed to the teachings of Aristotle, was, however, rejected by Muslim theologians,[27] as well as such philosophers as Suhrawardî and Mullâ Sadrâ.

The view which is held by Suhrawardî, and, more or less, accepted by Tûsî,[28] is that God's knowledge of things actually depends upon things themselves, which, as separate, distinct, and successive existents, are the objects of God's knowledge, but insofar as they are present to Him collectively and emanate from Him, constitute His knowledge. Suhrawardî highly criticizes the Peripatetic view, namely Ibn Sînâ, which holds that the originals exist in the divine Essence, and that the source of all knowledge is God's consciousness of His own Essence. Suhrawardî states that this view implies pluralism in the divine Essence because "that which becomes present is different from the person for whom the presence occurs."[29]

Then he approaches the issue (i.e., God's knowledge of His effects) by having recourse to his epistemological theory, knowledge by presence (*al-'ilm al-hudûrî*). According to him, God's knowledge occurs by a special illuminational relationship between God and things. To solve the problem, Suhrawardî refers to his illuminative account of vision (*ibsâr*). As we have seen in chapter 3, he holds that vision is the unobstructed presence of the lighted object before a sound eye. The very act of "seeing," which is, according to Suhrawardî, equal to "knowing," can occur only when there is no veil between the

external object and him who sees. In other words, the act of vision happens when the object is at the presence of the subject. The knowledge of God (*Nûr al-Anwâr*, literally, the Light of Lights), is of this kind, that is, a kind of presence, which infers a direct, illuminational relationship between God and things. Since all things are in the presence of the Light of Lights, all things are manifest (*zâhir*) to it; hence the Light of Light knows all things by presence. Therefore, God's vision and knowledge are the same.[30] Consequently, God knows things directly because of this relationship of *ishrâq* (illumination) and does not need any intermediate cognitive forms.[31]

In this regard, Tûsî's consideration of God's knowledge may be accounted as that of a follower or supporter of Suhrawardî's idea. To examine this, let us have a glance at Tûsî's argumentation. Rejecting Ibn Sînâ's doctrine of forms in God's mind, Tûsî, in this sense, departs from the traditional peripatetic view. His profound examination of the issue will throw light on our survey of the fact that the epistemological relation between God and His effects happens by virtue of knowledge by presence. He argues that just as the soul knows such imaginative and intellective forms as it itself creates directly, not through any preceding forms, but because it is their creator, so does God know things directly because they flow from Him as His creations, not through any preceding cognitive forms.[32] The affinity of this view with that of Suhrawardî in certain essential respects is obvious: both deny Ibn Sînâ's cognitive forms and identify God's knowledge of things with the fact that things flow from God, viz., a direct knowledge based upon God's creative activity.

Therefore, Suhrawardî and Tûsî hold that God's knowledge of things is the things themselves and thus is direct and not mediated by forms. They agree that this direct knowledge of God is not only of universals but also of particulars and, indeed, material objects. Thanks to this notion, they envisage two fundamental questions: first, how does God know (of course by presence) the details that would happen in time and in several places? In other words, how does God know something not existent now? The problem is that there can be no being, in the case of non-existent, at the presence of God, becoming the object of His knowledge. Furthermore, the changes that occur within the separate, distinct, and successive existents, would affect God's knowledge. Since there is a succession in temporal things, His knowledge would change from moment to moment.

They have profoundly considered these questions and, in the light of their doctrine, tried to answer them. Concerning the former, having denied His being in time and space, Suhrawardî and Tûsî maintain that the relation of all times (past, future, and present) and places to Him is a single identical relation (*al-nisba al-wâhida al-mutasâwîya*). Therefore, all things which are in time and space are present to Him and equally related to Him, although He knows their relationship to each other as well as the priority of some of them to others.[33]

With regard to the latter question, they hold that changes affect not God's knowledge but the objects of His

knowledge; and they don't necessitate His Essence to be a substratum (*mahall*) for changing and multiple entities.[34]

As we have seen before (in chapter 3), Mullâ Sadrâ strongly rejects Suhrawardî's doctrine of vision (that is, *al-ibsâr*). In the case of God's knowledge of particulars, i.e., material beings, he is also critical of both, Suhrawardî and Tûsî, and asks: how can perception take place on the part of a being that is beyond space and time? In addition, how can perception take place without sense-organ? For Mullâ Sadrâ, the most foolish theory of all is that of those who maintain that the material forms–despite their being submerged in matter–are forms of knowledge present in Him as His Knowledge.[35] The reason Mullâ Sadrâ relies on, as we have examined in chapter 3, is that this mode of material being is veiled from itself by itself. So, with regard to this mode, the material being cannot present in itself, let alone in a perceiver like God.[36]

Mullâ Sadrâ is also highly critical of Ibn Sînâ who describes divine knowledge of the particulars in purely conceptual terms. Mullâ Sadrâ argues that if His knowledge were treated in conceptual terms, as Ibn Sînâ apparently treats it,[37] it would have to be, as some kind of essence, additional to His Existence.[38]

Besides the above mentioned theories, Mullâ Sadrâ enumerates several views on God's knowledge, analyzing and evaluating them one by one.[39] He ultimately formulates his own view on the basis of the doctrine that existence alone is real and God is pure existence. On the one hand, he strongly

upholds the theory of "simplicity" (*al-bisâtat*) and formulates the principle that "a simple being is all things" (*basît al-haqîqa kull al-ashyâ`*).[40] To explain this principle, he says:

> Since the Necessary (Existent) –The Exalted– is the ultimate in the series or chain of needs and dependencies, it is the *telos* of everything, and the totality of all Truth-Reality (*alethiea*). Thus its Existence is neither bound up with anything nor dependent on anything. Then it is The Simple Reality from every point of view.[41]

On the other hand, he maintains that knowledge and existence are co-extensive, and just as existence admits of an infinite gradation and is applied with systematic ambiguity, so is knowledge.[42] By demonstrating these two very fundamental key principles, Mullâ Sadrâ gives his final solution to the problem of God's knowledge. He argues:

> His knowledge of all things is One reality. Yet while being One, it is knowledge of each (single) thing... His knowledge is reducible to His being. So just as His being–May He be exalted–is not mixed with privation of anything at all, likewise his knowledge of His Essence (or Self), which is the Presence (to Himself) of His Essence, is not mixed with the absence of anything at all. This is because His Essence is That Which makes all things to be those things and Which gives all realities their reality.[43]

Elsewhere, he adds: "Just as His Existence is not contaminated with privation or deficiency, so is His knowledge which is the presence of His Essence; nothing touches it... The

presence of His Essence-The Exalted-is the presence of everything."[44] What we conclude from the above arguments is that "simple existence" (*al-wujûd al-basît*), according to Mullâ Sadrâ, is a kind of being which contains all states of existence in itself without being alike with them, since existence is systematically ambiguous (*al-mushakkak*). God, therefore, knows all things, particulars and universals, because He envelops all of them as His modes and manifestations in different orders or gradations of existence. God's knowledge is consequently nothing but His simple existence (*al-wujûd al-basît*), an order of being unique to Him.[45]

Mullâ Sadrâ has some considerations against Suhrawardî and Tûsî with respect to their idea of God's knowledge of material things. According to Mullâ Sadrâ, material objects as such cannot even become objects of sense perception for humans, let alone for God. This is because these objects–their parts being mutually exclusive–are not even present to themselves, let alone present to a percipient.[46] This objection, however, is itself rejected by his well-known commentator, Sabzavârî. Confirming the theory of Suhrawardî and Tûsî, some contemporary thinkers such as Mesbâh Yazdî also reject the Sadrian objection. Mesbâh Yazdî asserts that one may accept the fact that a material thing is absent from itself to the extent that every part of its being is separated from the others, but it doesn't necessitate its absence from its efficient cause. It could be considered that as the cause gives the existence to everything, and therefore there is an ontological relation between them, in the same vein, everything is at the presence of its cause. Thus there is logically

an epistemological relation between the efficient cause and things.[47]

In certain places of his works, Mullâ Sadrâ himself, however, elaborates the argument that supports the idea that every being (particular or universal) is at the presence of God. These Sadrian statements give evidence for the opposite trend of his mind. Let us examine his argumentation.

The consequence of Mullâ Sadrâ's argument is that God's knowledge of things is the things themselves; knowledge and existence are, as seen before, coextensive, but existence is what is truly real, and knowledge, when separated from existence, becomes just so many concepts, essences or ideas. Mullâ Sadrâ has shown us that God's simple knowledge "*al-'ilm al-basît*" (which is identical with his being itself) involves all sorts of existence, including universal and particular forms of things and even material objects, which he tells us lie in the last "arrangement" (stage) of God's knowledge.

Because all existence is present at the level of God's simple being "*al-wujûd al-basît*," when He reflects upon Himself, He knows everything in both a simple and a detailed manner (*al-ijmâl wa al-tafsîl*). Mullâ Sadrâ then explains how God's knowledge and the forms or degrees of existence it consists of are related to Him. He declares that God, in knowing himself, knows other things by virtue of the fact that "knowledge of the complete cause necessitates complete knowledge of the effect."[48] If it is held, he states, that knowledge of the complete cause is not a conception, or idea (*naqsh*) extraneous to the very reality of the cause, but is

rather identical with the existence of the cause itself, "then it follows (logically) that the knowledge which comes from it (i.e., the cause itself) is nothing but the very existence of the effect itself." Furthermore, this knowledge of the effect is nothing more than the actual effect itself.[49] Accordingly, their (i.e., the effects') existence in the external world is exactly the same as the knowledge of God.[50]

What we may conclude here is that Mullâ Sadrâ, in this part of his argumentation, comes very close to Suhrawardî and Tûsî, regarding God's knowledge of the external world, insofar as he (Mullâ Sadrâ) has employed the same terminology. This is more obvious in the following demonstration. Mullâ Sadrâ uses the illuminative terms (such as *hudûr* and its relative words) with regard to the question: if all effects of God are regarded as His knowledge, including the succession of events that occurs in the temporal world, would this not constitute an affront to His unity, tainting it with multiplicity? Mullâ Sadrâ's answer to this problem here is precisely what we have already seen from Suhrawardî and Tûsî. He states:

> All temporal things and material events in relation to God, who is free from time and space, are equidistant (*mutasâwiyah al-aqdâm*) from the presence of God and also they are equidistant in actualization (*husûl*) in the presence of his majesty...it is not conceivable in God to suppose any past, present, or future, because these are relations by which motions and things subject to change are characterized as are "above," "below" and "proximity," etc., relations by which bodies and special things are characterized. Thus, it is necessary to hold

> that all existents are pure actuality (*fi'liyyah sirfah*) and pure presence (*hudûr mahd*) in relation to God, without temporal and special relation, without absence or lack; but time, with its renewal and space with its divisions with regard to God, are like a moment and a point.[51]

From this passage, a general outline of Mullâ Sadrâ's ultimate notion of the problem, namely God's knowledge of the external world, might be drawn. Much more would have to be said about Mullâ Sadrâ's arguments of the problem, but I hope I have shown the fact that, with respect to the subject of our study, the Sadrian theory is conceivable in the light of his notion of knowledge by presence. The point I am trying to make here is that Mullâ Sadrâ, having recourse to his ontological and epistemological bases, has reached the same illuminative conclusion as Suhrawardî, although by a different route.

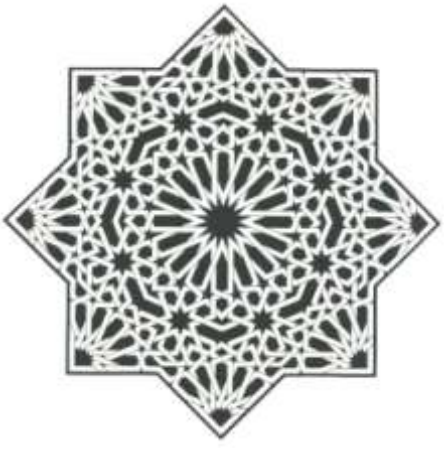
It seems to me that, with respect to the problem of God's knowledge of His effects, Mullâ Sadrâ assumes two kinds of relationship between God (as an emanating cause) and things: an ontological relationship which is described as causation (of course in Sadrian sense, i.e., *al-idâfa al-qayyûmîya*) and epistemological relationship which is known in Sadrâ's system as intuitive relationship (i.e., *al-idâfa al-shuhûdîya*). Mullâ Sadrâ ultimately solves the problem of God's knowledge of things by confirming that these two relationships, viz., *al-idâfa al-qayyûmîya* and *al-idâfa al-shuhûdîya*, are united and, consequently, what kind of interpretation is offered for the former is true for the latter as well.[52]

Considering the background of Mullâ Sadrâ on this subject, one may envisage the fact that there are three important sources of inspiration for Mullâ Sadrâ: rational method of Ibn Sînâ, illuminative path of Suhrawardî and mystical experience of Ibn 'Arabî. Confirming this threefold ground of Mullâ Sadrâ's theory, Fazlur Rahman states that "this is, of course, not to say that our philosopher lacks originality–on the contrary, his doctrine of existence and constant movement of existential forms is uniquely his own, even though his source of inspiration remains Ibn 'Arabî, and to a lesser extent al-Suhrawardî among post-Ibn Sînâ thinkers."[53]

It should be noted that the problem deserves a more thorough discussion than can be given here. However, concerning the scope of the subject of our study, the essential point to be drawn from this survey is that, according to both Suhrawardî and Mullâ Sadrâ, it is plausible to assume God's knowledge of His effects (i.e., particulars and universals) as a kind of knowledge by presence; although they have had recourse to different circuits. Furthermore, one may claim that, with respect to the topic, the same conclusion could be drawn from the Peripatetic theory as well, viz., the ultimate interpretation of God's knowledge is knowledge by presence.

Even if one believes that, according to the Peripatetics, the forms of things exist in the Essence of God, it still requires, however, that those forms are at the presence of God. In other words, God knows the universals (*al-kullîyât*) and the forms of the particulars (*suwar al-juz`îyât*) directly, without any

other form or idea. Accordingly, it is permissible to say that–for both sides, namely the Peripatetics and the illuminationists– the process of God's knowledge ultimately *occurs* by presence (*al-'ilm al-hudûrî*).



[1] Fârâbî, *al-Ta'lîqât*, pp. 8, 12; *Kitâb al-Fusûs*, p. 18, 20-21; Ibn Sînâ, *al-Ishârât*., vol. 4, al-namat 7, pp. 708-9; *al-Najât*, pp. 99-100, 102-3; *al-Ta'lîqâ*t, pp. 78-9, 81, 97; Ghazzâlî, *al-Iqtisâd fi al-I'tiqâd*, pp. 99-100; *Tahâfut al-Falâsifa*, pp. 188-201; al-Râzî, *al-Mabâhith al-Mashriqîya*, vol. 1, pp. 491-5; Suhrawardî, *Opera* II, *Hikmat al-Ishrâq*, pp. 150-153; Tûsî, *Sharh Mas`alat al-'Ilm*, pp. 38-44; Ibn Rushd, *Tahâfut al-Tahâfut*, pp.

447-468; Jâmî, *al-Durrat al-Fâkhira*, pp. 14-24; F. Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullâ Sadrâ*, pp. 146-163; H. Landolt, "Ghazâlî and Religionswissenschaft," p. 59, n. 158.

[2] Mullâ Sadrâ, *Asfâr*, III/1, pp. 180-2; *al-Mabda` wa al-Ma'âd*, pp. 90-91; Sabzavârî, *Asrâr al-Hikam*, pp. 67-68; Tabâtabâ`î, *Nihâyat al-Hikma*, pp. 326-9. F. Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullâ Sadrâ*, p. 146.

[3] It should be noted here that I don't mean by "knowledge by presence" the literal term which has been used in the recent philosophical texts. What I mean is that the "definition" that they (i.e., the Peripatetics) give about God's knowledge of Himself is exactly what we call "knowledge by presence" (*al-'ilm al-hudûrî*).

[4] For Fârâbî's idea see: *al-Ta'lîqât*, pp. 8, 12; for Ibn Sînâ's arguments see: *al-Ishârât*., vol. 4, al-namat 7, pp. 708-9; *al-Najât*, pp. 99-100, 102-3; *al-Ta'lîqât*, pp. 78-9, 81, 97.

[5] Ibn Sînâ, *al-Ta'lîqât*, p. 78.

[6] Ibid., pp. 78-9, 81, 97. On this argumentation, Ibn Sînâ is followed by his pupil Bahmanyâr; See *al-Tahsîl*, pp. 573-4.

[7] Suhrawardî, *Hikmat al-Ishrâq*, p. 111.

[8] Mullâ Sadrâ, *al-Mashâ'ir*, p. 63.

[9] Mullâ Sadrâ, *Asfâr*, III/1, p. 150, 174-6; *al-'Arshîya*, p. 224.

[10] *al-Mashâ'ir*, p. 63.

[11] *al-Mashâ'ir*, p. 63 (trans. by P. Morewedge in the same page).

[12] Mullâ Sadrâ, *Asfâr*, III/1, pp. 174-6. We can find the same argument and the same result in the former philosophers such as Bahmanyâr, the pupil of Ibn Sînâ. In his *al-Tahsîl* (p. 573).

[13] Richard Taylor, "Causation," *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), v. 2, p. 58.

[14] Ibid., p. 58.

[15] Richard Taylor, "Causation," *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), v. 2, p. 56, with ref. to *Metaphysics* I, 3.

[16] Ibn Sînâ, *al-Ishârât wa al-Tanbîhât*, vol.3, pp. 441-6; Bahmanyâr, *al-Tahsîl*, p. 519; al-Râzî, *al-Mabâhith al-Mashriqîya*, vol. 1, p. 586;

Suhrawardî, *al-Mutârahât*, pp. 377-9; Mullâ Sadrâ, *Asfâr*, I/2, pp. 127-130; F. Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullâ Sadrâ,* pp. 74-81.

[17] Ibn Sînâ, *al-Rasâ`il*, *Risâla al-Hudûd*, p. 117; Bahmanyâr, *al-Tahsîl*, p. 519; Mîr Dâmâd, *al-Qabasât*, p. 53; Suhrawardî, *Hikmat al-Ishrâq*, p. 62; *al-Mutârihât*, pp. 376-7; Mullâ Sadrâ, *Asfâr*, I/2, p. 127. In *Hikmat al-Ishrâq* (p. 62).

[18] Mullâ Sadrâ, *al-Mashâ'ir*, p. 66.

[19] Fârâbî, *al-Ta'lîqât*, pp. 8, 12; *Kitâb al-Fusûs*, p. 18, 20-21; Ibn Sînâ, *al-Ishârât*., vol. 4, al-namat 7, pp. 708-9; *al-Najât*, pp. 99-100, 102-3; *al-Ta'lîqât*, pp. 78-9, 81, 97; Ghazzâlî, *al-Iqtisâd fi al-I'tiqâd*, pp. 99-100; *Tahâfut al-Falâsifa*, pp. 188-201; al-Râzî, *al-Mabâhith al-Mashriqîya*, vol. 1, pp. 491-5; Suhrawardî, *Opera* II, *Hikmat al-Ishrâq*, pp. 150-153; Tûsî, *Sharh Mas`alat al-'Ilm*, pp. 38-44; Ibn Rushd, *Tahâfut al-Tahâfut*, pp. 447-468; Jâmî, *al-Durrat al-Fâkhira*, pp. 14-24.

The problem of God's knowledge, particularly His knowledge of things, has been assumed as a main part of Christian theology as well. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) has asserted:

> "The forms of all things occur in the essence of God, so He, at first, apprehends these forms by presence, not through other forms but rather through those identical forms."

P.K. Meagher, *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Religion* (Washington, D. C.: Corpus, 1979), p. 1826.

[20] It has been said that this issue is one of the most difficult of all philosophical questions in which some great sages, in spite of their sagacity and sharp-sightedness, have committed some blunders. Mullâ Sadrâ, *al-Mabda` wa al-Ma'âd*, p. 90.

[21] Mullâ Sadrâ, *Asfâr*, III/1, pp. 180-2; *al-Mabda` wa al-Ma'âd*, pp. 90-91; Sabzavârî, *Asrâr al-Hikam*, pp. 67-68; Tabâtabâ`î, *Nihâya al-Hikma* (Tehran: Intishârât-i al-Zahrâ, 1984), pp. 326-9.

[22] Ibn Sînâ, *al-Ishârât wa al-Tanbîhât*, vol. 3, *al-Namat* 7, pp. 712-14; *al-Ta'lîqât*, p. 82.

[23] Ibn Sînâ, *al-Najât*, pp. 102-5; Ibn Rushd, *Tahâfut al-Tahâfut*, 447-468.

[24] This doctrine of Ibn Sînâ's was severely criticized by al-Ghazzâlî (d. 505/1111) and al-Râzî (d. 606/1209). In this respect, al-Ghazzâlî has

excommunicated the philosophers in his book *Tahâfut al-Falâsifa* (Incoherence of the philosophers), p. 308. For al-Râzî's criticism see: his notes on Ibn Sînâ's *al-Ishârât* (Qum, 1982), pp. 71-3.

[25] *Opera* II, *Hikmat al-Ishrâq*, pp. 150-1 (trans. by J. Walbridge).

[26] For a careful account on this issue see: Marmura, "Some Aspects of Avicenna's Theory of God's Knowledge of Particulars," Journal of the American Oriental Society, 82 (1962), pp. 299-312, esp. pp. 304-9.

[27] For instance, "Abul-Barakât al-Baghdâdî (d. 547/1152) rejected Ibn Sînâ's formulation of the doctrine that God knows every particular but "in a universal way" rather than through perception. According to Baghdâdî, both sense perception and intellective perception belong to the soul and do not intrinsically involve the body. Then he concludes that God knows the particulars just as he knows the universals." Fazlur Rahman, "Islamic Philosophy," in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, vol. 4, p. 223.

[28] The important thirteenth century philosopher, scientist, and Shî'îte theologian Nasîr al-Dîn al-Tûsî was a great follower of Ibn Sînâ, and one of the most important commentators on his *al-Ishârât*. He was, however, influenced by certain views of the Illuminationist philosophers, although the exact extent and nature of this influence still needs to be closely determined.

[29] Suhrawardî, *Opera* II, *Hikmat al-Ishrâq*, p. 151.

[30] Suhrawardî, *Hikmat al-Ishrâq*, pp. 150-53.

[31] Mullâ Sadrâ precisely quotes Suhrawardî's idea and evaluates it, comparing it with Tûsî's view point. *Asfâr*, III/1, pp. 249-253.

[32] Tûsî, notes on Ibn Sînâ's *al-Ishârât*., vol. 4, al-namat 7, pp. 714-717; *Sharh-i Mas`alat al-'Ilm*, pp. 28-29.

[33] Suhrawardî, *Opera* II, *Hikmat al-Ishrâq*, p. 151; Tûsî, *Sharh-i mas`alat al-'ilm*, pp. 39-40.

[34] Tûsî, *Sharh-i mas`alat al-'ilm*, pp. 39-40.

[35] Mullâ Sadrâ, *al-'Arshîya*, p. 225.

[36] Ibid., p. 225.

[37] Ibn Sînâ, *al-Ta'lîqât*, p. 82.

[38] *Asfâr*, I/3, pp. 403-407,417.

[39] *Asfâr*, III/1, pp. 180-182; *al-Mabda` wa al-Ma'âd*, pp. 91-123. F. Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullâ Sadrâ*, pp. 146-163; See H. Landolt, "Ghazâlî and Religionswissenschaft," p. 59, n. 158.

[40] The theory of *basît al-haqîqa kull al-ashyâ`* has been profoundly considered and also demonstrated by Mullâ Sadrâ in his works. *Asfâr*, I/2, pp. 368-72; III/1, pp. 100-104; *al-Mabda` wa al-Ma'âd*, pp. 43-6; *al-Mashâ'ir*, pp. 62-3.

[41] *Al-Mashâ'ir*, p. 59 (trans. by P. Morewedge in the same page).

[42] *Asfâr,* I/1, pp. 117-8, 276. For the discussion of systematic ambiguity (*tashkîk*) of existence, see Mullâ Sadrâ, *Asfâr*, I/1, pp. ; F. Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullâ Sadrâ,* pp. 34-7.

[43] *Al-'Arshîya*, p. 224 (trans. by J.W. Morris as stated in *The Wisdom of the Throne*, pp. 104-105).

[44] *Al-Mashâ'ir*, pp. 69-70 (Trans. by P. Morewedge in the same page).

[45] *Asfâr*, I/3, pp. 407, 417.

[46] *Asfâr*, III/1, pp. 164-7, 259-260; *al-'Arshîya*, p. 225.

[47] For Sabzavârî's view see his notes on Mullâ Sadrâ's *Asfâr*, IV/1, pp. 179-81 (n. 1); III/1, pp.164-166 (n. 3); for Mesbâh's opinion see: *Ta'lîqa*., pp. 205, 256-7.

[48] *Asfâr*, III/1, p. 176; *al-Mabda` wa al-Ma'âd*, pp. 89-90; *al-'Arshîya*, p. 224.

[49] Mullâ Sadrâ, *Risâla fî al-Qadâ` wa al-Qadar*, p. 152 [trans. by D. Ede as stated in *Mullâ Sadrâ and the Problem of Freedom and Determinism* (Ph.D. thesis, McGill University, 1978), p. 52].

[50] Ibid., p. 152.

[51] Mullâ Sadrâ, *Risâla fî al-Qadâ` wa al-Qadar,* p. 152 [trans. by D. Ede as stated in *Mullâ Sadrâ and the Problem of Freedom and Determinism* (Ph.D. thesis, McGill University, 1978), p. 54].

[52] Mullâ Sadrâ, *al-Mabda` wa al-Ma'âd*, p. 121-3.

[53] F. Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullâ Sadrâ* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1976), pp. 162-3.

CONCLUSION

Conclusion

There is a question that may be asked: `Is the Sadrian epistemological system's task merely to describe the structure of human knowledge (especially knowledge by presence), and perhaps to fix its limits, or is it also to produce a rational reconstruction of the whole reality, which would exhibit the true relations between its parts, as well as subject and object?

It can be so far understood that the epistemological system of Mullâ Sadrâ, following in its illuminative elements of Suhrawardî's, gives not only clear answers to such questions as: what knowledge is, how its process occurs, and how its subjective and objective aspects are distinguished. Particularly in the light of theory of "knowledge by presence", it also elucidates a doctrine of a very close relation between knowledge and existence. In other words, considering "knowledge by presence" as an ultimate key for his epistemology, Mullâ Sadrâ attempts to prove a link between his ontological and epistemological systems.

In addition, one may conclude that the theory of "knowledge by presence" (*al-ʿilm al-hudûrî*) is considered by Mullâ Sadrâ to be necessary in order to connect the other elements of his philosophical epistemology. The existence of "knowledge by presence," on the one hand, elucidates a

reasonable interpretation of a point of relation between his ontological and epistemological system. On the other hand, it provides the necessary link among different kinds of cognition that enables him to offer a coherent and consistent theory of knowledge. The nature of this knowledge, according to Mullâ Sadrâ, has to be axiomatic and a priori. It is reasonable to assume that 'knowledge by presence' is a key to the validity of Mullâ Sadrâ's philosophical epistemology. Therefore, it is in this sense that 'knowledge by presence' becomes a common thread that connects his ontological and epistemological philosophy.

What Mullâ Sadrâ has clearly been trying to demonstrate is a rational link between existence, as an ontological element, and knowledge, as an epistemological principle. Existence, therefore, becomes the substance of knowledge and knowledge the substance of existence. In this respect, on the one hand, he states:

> The realization (inner-reality) of existence in its presence and inner revelation is the most evident of all entities.[1]

On the other hand, he declares:

> The knowledge of the reality of existence cannot be except through the illuminative presence and an intuition of the (immediate) determined (reality); then there will be no doubt about its inner-nature.[2]

Finally he maintains that:

> Knowledge is nothing but presence of existence without any obstacles.[3]

Thanks to these statements, Mullâ Sadrâ formulates his metaphysical theory of the two-fold link (that is, ontological and epistemological) between "existence" and "knowledge." On this point, I think that Mullâ Sadrâ establishes a very fundamental basis for the whole of his philosophical system. Having recourse to the theory of knowledge by presence, he demonstrates that one can achieve and apprehend the reality as it is (i.e., existence "*wujûd*"). Knowledge by presence is the only way, according to Mullâ Sadrâ, through which one has a direct experience of the reality. At the same time, this interpretation would give us a clue for an understanding of the links between Mullâ Sadrâ's ontology and his epistemology.

Before Mullâ Sadrâ, the philosophical epistemology of Suhrawardî had comprised the similar conclusion, although by a different terminology. Suhrawardî, in the light of his theory of light, maintained that one can ultimately attain certainty only through the knowledge which is attained by illumination. This illuminative knowledge (*al-'ilm al-ishrâqî*) is obtainable without any mediation. In the very beginning of his *Hikmat al-Ishrâq,* Suhrawardî concisely states his theory of 'intuitive knowledge.' He says:

> As we observe the sensible world through which we gain certainty of its states of affairs, we then base a thorough and precise science on this basis (math, astronomy). By analogy, we observe certain things in the spiritual domain and then use them as a foundation upon which other things can be based. He whose path and method are other than this will not benefit from this and soon will be plunged into doubt.[4]

Suhrawardî tries, as I understand him, to demonstrate that there is an important link between his ontological and epistemological system, which has been represented by *ishrâq* (intuition). He developed this idea thanks to his philosophy of light. Light therefore becomes the substance of knowledge and knowledge the substance of light. In this regard, he states:

> If there be anything that needs no definition or explanation, it has to be obvious by nature, and there is nothing more obvious and clear than light. Thus, there is nothing that needs no definition except light.[5]

In other words, the theory of "knowledge by presence," and thus the whole discussion of knowledge of whatever kind and however achieved, has an ontological as well as epistemological function and dimension. It seems to me that it was one of the fruits of Sadrian epistemology that the process of "knowledge by presence" gained a prominent ontological rank. It might be held that Mullâ Sadrâ, in the light of this theory, turns the traditional epistemology, namely Aristotelian and Neoplatonian, into metaphysics.

The epistemological conclusion to be drawn from the Sadrian examination of "knowledge by presence" is clear: like the whole epistemological system, this theory is underpinned by a substratum of both Aristotelianism and Neoplatonism. As in some of his other parts of philosophy that are not to be classified directly under the heading of epistemology, these two philosophies stand shoulder by shoulder and frequently interact. Philosophically, this must be counted as a major facet of Mullâ Sadrâ's philosophy and metaphysics;

epistemologically the combination is intriguing because of the concepts of hierarchy and emanation which are infiltrated into the basic Aristotelian data and terminology, and also because of the attempt to view epistemology in terms of ontology. Therefore, the prime importance of "knowledge by presence" in Mullâ Sadrâ's epistemology, and the link between progress in several levels of knowledge, cannot be overstated.

In the Sadrian system, the three technical terms "existence" (*wujûd*), "presence" (*hudûr*), and "intuition" (*shuhûd*) have received a similar meaning and in certain cases are used interchangeably. Concerning Mullâ Sadrâ's doctrine, to show the inter-relation among these three terms, S. H. Nasr gives us an interpretation. He states that "the ordinary man is usually aware of the container, whereas the sage sees content which is at one being (*wujûd*), presence (*hudûr*), and witness (*shuhûd*)... In fact, the degree of awareness of being is itself dependent upon the degree of awareness of the knower, the degree and mode according to which he *is*. The more man *is*, the more he is able to perceive being."[6] This version that partially indicates Mullâ Sadrâ's doctrine, also elucidates that "knowledge by presence" is precisely a connecting link between ontological chain and epistemological sequence in Mullâ Sadrâ's philosophical system.

I should like to draw a general and corollary conclusion from Mullâ Sadrâ's main epistemic thesis as it has been presented. Mullâ Sadrâ's subjectivist thesis may at first seem inconsistent with his ontological and epistemological system. However, to be a subjectivist in this sense, i.e., in the theory of

knowledge by presence (*al-ʿilm al-hudûrî),* is not necessarily to be anti-empiricist or anti-inductivist. On the contrary, to be a subjectivist in this sense is to appreciate fully the limits of the empirical or inductive methods, not as a prelude to disposing of these methods, but as a basis of understanding the limitations imposed on Man's epistemic ability.

This brings us to the final point that Mullâ Sadrâ seems to have sustained that human/material knowledge is by definition quite limited and of lesser value. In order to arrive at true knowledge, one has to emancipate oneself from all ties with the material world. Real knowledge therefore is quite distinct from this-worldly knowledge.

As a result of this study, it seems that Mullâ Sadrâ's theory of knowledge by presence, which has had a long background in the history of Islamic thought (namely the Peripatetic and Illuminatinist), has played a significant role in his philosophical system, *al-hikma al-mutaʿâlîya*. Although Suhrawardî was his forerunner in pointing to the significance of knowledge by presence, Mullâ Sadrâ gave a systematic shape to the issue within the whole philosophical structure. Having recourse to certain rational and mystical elements, Mullâ Sadrâ tried to prove that "mystic experience is a cognitive experience and mystic truth is essentially intellectual truth."[7] Since he refers all kinds of knowledge to knowledge by presence, it seems correct to assume that "knowledge by presence" is the key principle of his epistemological system.

Concerning the problem of knowledge by presence, in comparing Mullâ Sadrâ and Suhrawardî, it could be found that,

in one sentence, Mullâ Sadrâ reached much the same illuminative conclusion as Suhrawardî, although by a different route. According to this study, it could be understood that, in the context of Suhrawardî's Illuminative philosophy, Mullâ Sadrâ has established his epistemological system. Nevertheless, regarding the issue, there are some differences between our sages, Suhrawardî and Mullâ Sadrâ. These differences, as seen in this study, might be listed as follows:

- The definition of knowledge,
- The division of knowledge,
- Theory of vision (*al-ibsâr*), and
- The problem of God's Knowledge.

As we have already examined, Mullâ Sadrâ, considering these problems, seems to elaborate his own view, departing and, in some cases, refuting Suhrawardî's elaboration.

Consequently, it has been apparently realized that Mullâ Sadrâ's doctrine of knowledge by presence is the corner stone of his epistemological system. In the light of this doctrine, he gives a new definition of knowledge, a novel interpretation of its division into *al-'ilm al-hudûrî* and *al-'ilm al-husûlî*, and, finally, a systematic chain of various kinds of knowledge by presence (e.g., self-knowledge, God's knowledge of His Essence and God's knowledge of things).

[1] Mullâ Sadrâ, *al-Mashâ'ir* (New York: SSIPS, 1992), p.6 (trans. by P.Morewedge in the same page).

[2] Ibid., p. 30.

[3] Ibid., p. 63.

[4] Suhrawardî, *Opera* II, *Hikmat al-Ishrâq*, p. 13 [trans. by M. Aminrazavi in *Suhrawardî's Theory of Knowledge* (Ph. D. Thesis, Temple University, 1989), p. 174].

[5] Ibid., p. 106 [trans. by M. Aminrazavi in *Suhrawardî's Theory of Knowledge* (Ph. D. Thesis, Temple University, 1989), p. 175].

[6] S.H. Nasr, "Post-Avicenna Islamic Philosophy and the study of Being," in Parviz Morewedge (ed.), *Philosophy of Existence* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1982), p. 341.

[7] F. Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullâ Sadrâ* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1975), p. 4.

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In The Name of Allah

The Most Compassionate

The Most Merciful

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Book Title: **al-`Ilm al-Huduri: Knowledge by Presence**

Authored by: Sayyed Mohammad Reza Hejazi, Ph.D., H.I.M.

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The Book: This book explores the issue of knowledge by presence as an epistemological problem in philosophy. Al-`Ilm al-Huduri (knowledge by presence) deserves as an epistemological bridge between philosophy and mysticism. This book is a comparative study of the epistemology of Suhrawardî and Mullâ Sadrâ Shîrâzî, two Muslim thinkers of the 6th/12th and 11th/17th century. It focuses on two main issues: Illuminative theory of knowledge and, in the framework of this theory, Mullâ Sadrâ's doctrine of knowledge by presence (al-'ilm al-hudûrî) studied in the context of his philosophical system (al-hikmah al-muta'âlîyah). Mullâ Sadrâ's doctrine of knowledge by presence is the corner stone of his epistemological system. In the light of this doctrine, he gives a new definition of knowledge, an innovative interpretation of its division into al-'ilm al-hudûrî and al-'ilm al-husûlî, and, finally, a systematic chain of various kinds of knowledge by presence (e.g., self-knowledge, God's knowledge of His Essence and God's knowledge of things). These three aspects of his doctrine have been surveyed and, in comparing them with Suhrawardî's theory, evaluated in this book.

The Author: Dr. Sayyed Mohammad Reza Hejazi is Professor of Islamic Philosophy, Mysticism, Religious Studies and Islamic Theology at I.M. Seminary, Director of the Islamic Studies and Research Academy (ISRA), California, USA, Chairman of A.B.A. Assembly of North America, and a founder member and a Trustee of the Ibn Sina Health Foundation of North America (ISHFNA). He has also served as Director at the I.E.C., Washington D.C. and was a Chairman at the I.I.N.Y., New York, USA. He holds a Master of Arts degree in Islamic Jurisprudence from Elmiyeh Seminary of Qom, a doctorate in Islamic Philosophy from B.U.C. Institute of Qom, a second Master of Arts degree in Epistemology and Islamic Mysticism from McGill University, Montreal, Canada; and a second doctorate in Philosophy of Ethics from Catholic University of America, Washington D.C., USA. Dr. Hejazi has published 22 books in Arabic, Persian and English. He has also published more than 18 articles in different languages and participated in about 28 international and inter-disciplinary Seminars, Conferences and Academic Workshops. In addition to his teaching and writing, Dr. Hejazi serves as a consultant in the fields of education, morality, religion and philosophy.

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